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A Study in Social Protest

JANET MARCH

BY
FLOYD DELL

Revised Edition

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JANET MARCH

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NOV 18 1963

To
FREDERICK FEUCHTER

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Book One: Once Upon a Time

JANET MARCH

CHAPTER ONE: The Founder

I.

THE towns of White Falls and St. Pierre, on the upper Mississippi, are less than a century old. This prairie region, inhabited by Indians, visited by missionaries, trappers and traders, and disputed by the empires of France, Spain and Great Britain, became in the nineteenth century a part of the frontier territory of the young American republic, and settlements began to be made along the river,—among them St. Pierre and White Falls.

As the territory beyond was opened up by the treaties with Indian tribes, these frontier settlements grew. The prairie became a wheat-growing region; and when the railroads came, White Falls and St. Pierre were points through which an increasing flood of wheat and flour streamed eastward, with lumber and iron-ore to follow. The little settlements became prosperous towns; and certain of their citizens took rank as grain, flour, lumber and iron magnates, and as representatives of the spirit of American enterprise. Their glory was scarcely diminished when these industries passed subsequently into the control of Chicago and Eastern capitalists; and the story of the founding of these fortunes remained a tradition when the fortunes themselves had suffered the ill fate which attends even upon fortunes.

In White Falls and St. Pierre to-day the Marches are still reckoned among the most distinguished families, though they are no longer among the richest. Andrew March, now dead, was the founder of one of White Falls' great businesses; his history was a part of the history of the town. Every school-child in the state used to know the edifying story of his rise

from poverty to riches. He had been one of the first shippers of wheat; he owned the first grain-storage warehouse in White Falls, and built its first modern grain-elevator. He was, in his later years, a director in the great grain-elevator company which ruled the agricultural destinies of the Northwest.

His three sons, John, Edward and Bradford, are stockholders in the business. John March, however, who was active in its management during his father's later years, is at present more interested in the development of iron-mining. Edward has retired; he was a gay fellow in his youth, and he still, in his late fifties, clings to youth's airs and graces; within the last ten years, after remaining so long a bachelor, he married and divorced an actress; and he is said to have the best cellar in St. Pierre. Bradford, the youngest son, also in his fifties, a much more sedate personage than Edward, and much less enterprising than John, retains an official connection with the business to which his father's life was devoted; but he makes a hobby of his interest in educational affairs, and takes pride in being a regent of a local university. Andrew March's daughter and eldest child, "Dolly," as she is still called, is Mrs. R. H. Royce, wife of the president of the St. Pierre Loan and Trust Company; and, though a grandmother, the town's acknowledged social leader.

Thus the Marches are among the best people in St. Pierre. There are many kinds of people in St. Pierre. There are, conspicuously, the newest rich, who have no standards, no traditions, only crude wishes and the means of satisfying them; they have power, they do what they like, and are progressively tolerated because they are envied. Even by some of the best people; but not by the Marches. They are, these Marches, remote from the prodigalities of that vulgarly spendthrift crew.

The Marches are established; respectable, rather than rich. The grain-elevator company, as a matter of fact, had suffered a serious setback during the business depression which immediately preceded Andrew March's death, some years ago; and Andrew March's own fortune was found to have been almost wiped out by the increasingly generous philanthropies of his later years. Of course, John March can always look after himself; Edward has sufficient for a care-free existence; Bradford's way of life is modest in the extreme; and Dolly

has the St. Pierre Loan and Trust Company at her back. They are certainly none of them poor. They represent, in their somewhat different fashions, the golden mean of life in St. Pierre.

The March name, now more than ever, connotes old, reputable, solid values—yes, even bearing Edward in mind; by contrast with the hectic amours of the newest rich, conducted as they are unblushingly in the glare of newspaper publicity, his marriage with an actress seems to have had an old-fashioned dignity, and his divorce might serve as a model of discretion. The Marches, in these post-war days, stand for all that is considered soundest and best in American life. Why the Marches particularly? Because they are the children of Andrew March. They represent what is remembered of his legend. And so tremendous, in the last few years, have been the changes which have left them standing as the surviving symbols of a great tradition, that they seldom now look back and remember their own earlier attitude toward that tradition—the tradition of Andrew March.

2.

One day, years ago, when Andrew March was living and his children were just beginning their several careers, Bradford, then in his first year at college, was calling on his sister Dolly, Mrs. Royce. She handed him, with a laugh, a beautifully drawn-up family-tree, the product of extended and expensive research, and perhaps also some imaginative effort, by a professional genealogist. It showed that they were descended, on their mother's side, from Konrad von Hoffmann (a German robber baron, who was slain by an uprising of peasants—this part of the ancestral legend was no news to Bradford), and on their father's side from certain of the Scottish Earls of March, and thus ultimately from Ughtred, Earl of Northumberland, and Æthelred, the Saxon king!

Bradford frowned, and handed back the document. "Have you shown it to father?" he asked.

"No," said Dolly, putting it away in a frail escritoire. "Father likes to think that he founded the March family as well as the March fortune."

"Won't the robber-baron satisfy your pride of ancestry?" Bradford asked.

"I like the Earls of March better," she said.

"You don't really believe all that stuff?" he demanded.

"Why shouldn't I believe it?" his sister countered. "I'm sure it's as true as father's own story! Poor but honest—good mother, daily prayers, money in the bank, early to bed and early to rise—fame and fortune! Do *you* believe all *that*?"

"Perhaps not, exactly," Bradford confessed.

"But *he* does. Well, why shouldn't I believe this, if I want to?"

"It's like a Ouida novel," said Bradford. "So cheaply romantic."

"Not so cheap, at that!" Dolly laughed. "At any rate, it isn't Horatio Alger!"

3.

Whether Andrew March was descended from Saxon kings is for genealogists to decide. Andrew's own knowledge of his ancestry went back only to his father, a restless Scotch-Irish-English workingman, and to his mother, who had been a cook in a frontier boarding-house.

James March had immigrated from England, where he had been a miner. He had taken up land in Ohio, and left it to become a miner again. He had drifted west to Michigan Territory—the remoter part, which is now Wisconsin—and there he became a lead miner, one of those who gradually displaced the Indian miners from their immemorial occupation, crowded them out of their lands, and helped to bring on the Black Hawk war. Like all these miners in the early days, James March wintered at first in a dug-out; and these miners, burrowing into the hills for shelter like hibernating animals, were nicknamed "badgers," and gave their nickname to the state growing up around them. But as the lead-mining industry developed, a few boarding-houses sprang up; and in one of these, James March found a girl whose folks had come from England, and who had a strain of Scotch and Irish in her blood that endeared her to him in spite of their differences

in disposition. She was a good Presbyterian, and made him stop drinking. They married. Andrew was their only child.

Once more James March tried farming, taking up land a little further north and west; and when the territory beyond the Mississippi was opened for settlement, he moved there—and died, leaving his wife and ten-year-old son penniless. Mrs. March was invited to come and live with a married cousin in White Falls, then recently settled.

Young Andrew, though he was accustomed to making himself useful, soon felt himself to be an encumbrance to these relatives; and when another of his mother's relatives, a baker in Chicago, wrote offering to take the boy to learn the trade, he was eager to accept. But his mother refused to let him go.

"No, Andrew," she said, "and I'll tell you why." Andrew remembered this speech all his life long. "You're too young to go out in the world, with none but a man to look after you, and he not the kind a good mother would trust her son to. No, I'm an ailing woman, and I shan't be long here, I expect; but while I can, I'll do my duty by you. I've taught you reading and writing and figuring—none too well, maybe, but it's all the education you're likely to get. When you grow up, Andrew, and have children of your own, I want you to give them a good schooling, the best that's to be had. That's one thing. But there's something else that you can learn better from me than elsewhere—an important thing for a young lad, just as much as reading and writing and figuring—and that's how to be a decent Christian man. When I'm gone, you'll make your way in the world all the better for biding with your mother now."

Death came to her, as she had expected, within a few years. The night before she died, she talked to her son. "Andrew," she said, "you'll have to look after yourself now, but I trust you to do it. You've been a good son to me, and you'll be a good man. And you'll get along, I've no doubt; the town is growing, and you've made friends for yourself. You'll do well, I've no fear of that. But I want you to remember this, that of any money you've got for odd jobs and brought home to me, I've always put a tithe in the contribution bag on Sunday. Oh, you've said nothing, but I could see you were cross with me more than once, because of the many things we needed

the money for, ourselves! I told you a tenth was little enough to give to God. You'll remember that, Andrew, and tithe for yourself as I've done for you."

Andrew's children had heard this story often—too often. And they knew his earnest reply:

"Yes, mother, and the rest I shall put in the bank."

"Well—you'll be somebody of importance, I expect. And have nothing to be ashamed of, either."

The day after her funeral, Andrew, aged thirteen, began seriously to build his life's career. He knew better, now, than to wish to learn a trade; he was on the lookout for a business opportunity. But White Falls offered little. He must wait for his chance. In the meantime he could support himself by odd jobs, and make new friends.

His first job under these new conditions was like many he had had before—a week's wood-cutting for a neighbor. But it had its epochal significance, for all that. As wages for this week's work he received a dollar. He paid fifty cents of it to his relative for board and lodging; he was a man now, and must pay his way. He put ten cents, a tithe of his week's earning, in the contribution bag at church. Ten cents more went to pay for having a patch put on his shoes. The remaining thirty cents he deposited in the town bank, thereby opening an account.

The old banker, R. H. Royce's father, used to delight in telling about that historic event. "I thought it was a pretty good joke," he would say, "starting an account with thirty cents! But the boy was so solemn about it, I couldn't refuse him. I said to him, 'That's the right spirit, Andy, this thirty cents may be the nest-egg of a big fortune!'—Yes, sir, that's what I said in jest, little knowing how true it was!"

4-

When Andrew was fourteen, he got a job in Macdougall's livery-stable. Macdougall was also more or less Scotch, and liked the boy; perhaps respecting him for the very priggishness of which he made continual fun. "Mac," as he was called, was a sporting man, originally from Kentucky; possibly he had left there under a cloud, but frontier towns were

easy-going places and no one inquired too closely into such past histories. He was a genial, lazy, spendthrift soul, and everybody liked him—even his wife, who might have had some reason to complain. He was not much interested in his livery-stable as a business; always he talked of going back to Kentucky; he had bred a trotting colt that he said would make him a mint of money down there. He drove about the town and its outskirts in fine weather behind this colt, in a little cart, picking up idle young men and foolish girls for rides, and boasting to them of what the filly could do if she had a chance. He chummed with steamboat crews, listening with homesick fascination to their stories of gay life in the river-towns to the south. He drank and played cards, by way of enlivening his dreary exile in White Falls. It was not a puritanical place, and these things were not condemned except by a very small minority of pious folk. Even the shadier side of his life, as rumored, was merely a subject for jocular masculine remark. There were a few men in the village whose business took them away from time to time—a small trader who dealt in furs and went about visiting trappers in remote spots; a peddler who journeyed from farm to farm selling handkerchiefs, looking-glasses and such trifles to the farmers' wives and daughters; Firewater Pete, who sold bad whisky to the neighboring Indians—and the wives of these wanderers, women who had no "reputation" to begin with, were supposed to entertain Mac in their husbands' absence. If any married man in White Falls had to go away from town for any reason for a day or two, some witty friend was sure to ask gravely, "Won't your wife be lonesome?" and then add, "Well, it's all right, Mac will come and cheer her up if you ask him to!" Women were not supposed to hear these coarse jokes. But girls were warned by their mothers not to accept Mac's invitations to ride behind his trotting mare, and told that the silly girls who were seen riding with him were no better than they should be. This, however, did not prevent Mac from finding silly girls to go driving with on summer evenings.

Mac was sufficiently notorious as a reprobate, and Andrew was so well known in the village as a pious lad, that it was a cause of mild astonishment when Andrew went to work for Mac.

Mac's wife wondered about it, too. One morning of the first week of Andrew's employment, Mac having gone to the stable and Andrew come for breakfast, she sat watching him eat his plate of pancakes and sausage, and presently said with a little embarrassment, "I hear you're quite the model youth, Andy." She looked at the tall black-haired boy across the table, and laughed tolerantly. "Not that I think that's anything against you. You've lots of time yet to grow up and learn what the world's like. But aren't you afeared of learning bad tricks from Mac? I suppose you think he's the devil's own, what with his card-playing and drinking and all?"

"It's not for me to say so, ma'am," Andrew replied. "But you needn't be afeared for me, Mrs. Macdougall."

"Oh, well," said Mac's wife, "anyway there's a lot worse things to learn than what Mac could teach you!"

Andrew wondered briefly what these things could be, and doubted if she were right.

"Sometimes," she said, "a man is liked all the better for a few faults. Look at Mac, there isn't a man would have the heart to take advantage of his free and easy ways. You can't help liking him, can you?"

But it was not the genial personality of Mac, nor even the cooking of Mac's wife, that had attracted Andrew. No. He had found his business opportunity.

Andrew intended to own that livery-stable some day.

5.

Mac had already begun to tease him about his virtue. "When you get your first wages this week," he said, "maybe you'd like me to show you the best way to spend them. I've made a study of the subject, and there's many a young fellow I've assisted that way in my time, some of 'em right here in White Falls. Small and limited as the town is, I should say that you could get all of two dollars and a half's worth of devilment between Saturday night and Sunday morning, especially if you have a little expert advice. How about it, son?"

"I'm much obliged for the offer," said Andrew civilly.

"But I'm putting two dollars and a quarter in the bank this week."

Mac made the old, inevitable joke: "What are you doing with the other two bits? You don't mean to tell me you're keeping a woman, Andy?"

Andrew flushed. "I'm not saying what the other twenty-five cents is for—but it's nothing I'm ashamed of."

"Ah, well," said Mac, "I'm glad to hear about that bank-account. Some day I may need money, and I'll call on you for some." And he laughed genially.

Nine years later, when Andrew was just turned twenty-three, that joke, like the banker's, bore its fruit of dead earnest. Mac was in trouble, about a girl. It was, perhaps, blackmail. Andrew did not trouble to sift the rumors. But when some one told him that Mac, in desperation, had said he would sell a half-interest in his livery-stable for a thousand dollars, Andrew went to him with an offer of the money.

Mac was incredulous; Andrew's wages had been raised, year by year, and he knew that Andrew saved his money; but he could not believe that Andrew had, out of nothing, accumulated such a sum. And so Andrew went to the bank and returned with a thousand dollars in cash, together with a bill-of-sale which he had had the town lawyer draw up for him. And Mac, relieved of his anxieties, and laughing hugely at the joke on himself, signed the document.

6.

But it was something more than a joke. And Mac began to see the other side of it. He looked queerly at Andrew.

Andrew could not understand why.

He came to dinner at Mac's house a few days later, bringing Mac's wife a cheap brooch, purchased from the peddler, for a birthday present. He had followed explicitly certain advice of his mother's, and always gave little presents to his relatives and friends on their birthdays and at Christmas—"so that no one can call you close, Andrew!"

Mac, who had had dinner and gone to the livery-stable before Andrew left, had not spoken to him. And Mac's wife

gave him a furious look when he entered. She had just had the whole story out of her husband.

Andrew's present mollified her a little. "You've a good heart, Andrew," she said. And then her face grew dark with anger again. "I can't make you out," she said. "Oh, you needn't look so innocent! Mac's been telling me about the dirty trick you played on him. I heard something about it before, but I didn't believe it. I'd never have thought it of you!"

"But," Andrew exclaimed, sitting more stiffly upright in his chair, "what have *I* done?"

"It's the joke of the town!" she said. "Of course, he told it on himself. Mac would! But it was bound to come out, anyway."

Andrew was genuinely puzzled and confused. "You mean, about the—the girl? I don't see what I—"

Mac's wife snapped her fingers scornfully. "The girl!" she said. "That for the girl! You don't suppose I care about that fool nonsense, do you? It wouldn't be the first time that's happened. I'm talking about the dirty deal *you* gave him!"

"What," Andrew demanded, "have I done that's wrong?"

She stared at him. "You've taken away his self-respect, if you want to know," she said.

Andrew was bewildered.

"I'm not sure I know what you're talking about," he began cautiously. "The only thing I've done—"

"I know what you've done," said Mac's wife impatiently. "You caught him with his pants down. I suppose you think you're smart!"

Andrew blushed, as he always did at any vulgarity of speech. "Are you referring, ma'am," he asked, "to the business deal between myself and your husband?"

"Business deal! Yes, I suppose you *would* call it that. I say you're as bad as the blackmailing hussy that was hounding him!"

"I well know," said Andrew, "that a half-interest in the livery-stable is worth more than a thousand dollars, if that's what you mean. But it was your husband's own proposition, I assure you it was. I simply took him up."

"Oh, Mac's a fool," she said bitterly. "But why need you

have exposed him to the whole town? A bill-of-sale made out by a lawyer! You might have left him his pride."

"His pride?" Andrew repeated incredulously.

"Yes," said Mac's wife fiercely, "his pride! It's all he has."

Andrew pondered that, vainly. He shook his head. "Mrs. Macdougall," he said, "would you mind telling me what you think I *ought* to have done, under the circumstances, with Mac needing the money and me having it to spare?"

"Anything but what you did! Couldn't you have made it a loan between yourselves, if you wanted to help him out of his trouble?"

Andrew had been bewildered; now he was staggered. He sat with his mouth hanging open, incapable of thought, occupied wholly with the shock of an idea alien to his scheme of life. Then he spoke, disjointedly, in sheer amazement. "A loan? A loan—to Mac? A loan—to help Mac?—My thousand dollars!"

A picture came into his mind. It was the picture of a pail of water, frozen over the top with ice. Beside it lay a hatchet. It was the pail from which he poured the water to wash in, in dark winter mornings, in his little room in the stable loft, with the thermometer at fifteen below zero. The hatchet was to break the ice with—the hatchet with which he had to break the ice on cold winter mornings. Up at four o'clock, to feed the horses and clean the stalls, and wait for Mac to drift in at seven or eight o'clock, or some days not till noon, so that he could go and get breakfast. He heard Mac's voice, taunting him with his virtue, describing lickerishly the delights of vice. With a kind of angry wonder he realized that this money of his was to Mac and his wife like *any other money*! This thousand dollars, made sacred by toil and self-denial, dedicated to high purposes, was to them a mere piece of good-luck, like a coin found in the gutter. This thousand dollars, which was to make of him all that his mother expected him to be, was to them something to be handed over to an adulterer, out of friendship. Yes, out of friendship! To Mac! His thousand dollars! His hopes, his plans, his life, abandoned to a fool and a waster!

Unconsciously he spoke aloud.

"Friendship! To a drunkard that will die blaspheming in the poorhouse! My thousand dollars!"

It was the only time in his whole life that his emotions mastered him so wholly as to leave him without self-control and discretion. And it was too late when he realized that he was uttering his thoughts aloud.

Mac's wife turned pale, and then flamed. She rose from her chair opposite him. "I wonder," she said, "that you have the face to sit at his table!"

Andrew rose, too. "I am sorry I said those things," he apologized. "I had no right to say them. It is for God to judge." He started to go away.

"No—wait!" said Mac's wife. "I want to tell you this. It isn't the damned livery-stable Mac cares about. He liked you, and he was going to *give* you a half interest in it next year, on your birthday. Believe it or not, it's God's truth!"

"Mrs. Macdougall," said Andrew severely, "I think you are talking just plain foolishness. And I'm going, so as not to hear any more of it. Good-by."

He never sat at Mac's table again.

And before another year was out, Mac sold him the other half-interest in the livery-stable. The bank lent Andrew the money.

Mac and his wife left town.

It was this livery-stable which later became Andrew March's feed-store, and still later the March warehouse for storing grain to sell on commission. On its site was built the March grain-elevator. Thirty odd years after that first transaction by which Andrew became part owner of a livery-stable, he was a director in one of America's great businesses—a stockholder in the bank in which he had deposited that first thirty cents—and a trustee of the church in which he had given that first tithe.

He had lived up to his mother's expectations. He was somebody of importance.

7.

And Mac, it seems, returned many years later, after varied wanderings, to fulfill literally Andrew's prophecy—to die, a

drunkard, in the poorhouse. Mac's wife was with him, still loyal, when he died.

This was a story that came to light, or almost came to light, through the enterprise of a girl reporter, assigned to attend a poor-farm funeral and get a "sob-story." The reporter interviewed the old woman who followed the coffin to the potter's field; and what she learned was so interesting that it never was printed at all. Andrew's son, John, in conference with the managing editor, decided that it would not do to let that story be printed.

But when John reported this discreet decision to his father, old Andrew was very angry—more angry than John had ever known him to be; and angry at John.

"Let them print the story," he said. "I've nothing to be ashamed of! I said that God would judge—and God has judged!"

And he repeated defiantly:

"I've nothing to be ashamed of!"

CHAPTER TWO: A Family

I.

IT had been a part of Andrew March's carefully considered plan of life to marry. In this matter, too, he was guided by his mother's counsel. "Andrew," she had said, "you'll not be thinking about the girls for a long time yet. But the day will come, and I not here to advise you, so you'll remember what I'm telling you now. I'll speak plainly, it's a wife you'll be looking for, and if you can't think of her as housemate and bedfellow and mother of your children, and good friend to you whatever befalls year in year out, then let her alone. And mind this, too, it's herself you'll bed with and not any of her trimmings, and if you've made a mistake you must sleep with it just the same, so make sure you've found the right woman. And one thing more, Andrew; when you've found her, don't be afeared to ask her to marry you. Women are more sensible creatures than you'd think; after all, they need a mate, and they know a man when they see him. And you'll be a man, wanting a wife and able to support her, when you do ask, I'm sure of that."

Twenty-four years old and the owner of a livery-stable, Andrew was a man, wanting a wife and able to support her; it remained only to find the right woman. And he did.

But no one who knew Andrew would ever have guessed that the right woman would be that frivolous, scornful, golden-haired young beauty, Dr. Palmgren's daughter. Nor could any one of Alma Palmgren's friends have guessed that she would be so sensible a creature as to know a man in Andrew when she saw him.

Alma was reputed to take after her mother.

Her father was a good man, a quiet, hard-working doctor, with no airs; universally admired in the town, all the more so in contrast to the doctor who had been here when he came—a lazy, drunken bungler. Dr. Palmgren's wife, though

no one ever heard him complain of her, was considered to be his misfortune. She was a petulant, childish, foolish woman who held herself above her neighbors. She had been (though nobody in White Falls knew what that meant, or cared) a Hoffmann—one of the Hoffmanns of St. Louis. The Hoffmanns, if you should ask, were the leading family of St. Louis; moreover, their ancestors in Germany had once had a *von* before their name, and a castle on the Rhine. Mrs. Palmgren and her ancestors were considered somewhat ridiculous by the townspeople of White Falls. Alma, it was said, was going to be her mother all over again. To make sure of that, her mother had taken her, at seventeen, for a visit to Germany, from which they had recently returned. Alma, after a year among relatives in Berlin and Dresden, and a visit to Rome and Naples, had quaintly aristocratic and cosmopolitan airs, and, or so it was assumed, her mother's contempt for this backwoods town.

Nevertheless, Andrew March had made up his mind that she was to be his wife. He had seen her, of course, as a young girl; but he had first marked her as his own when she came back from abroad. He thought a good deal about her in the next two years; but he was not making up his mind—it was already made up. He was improving his business prospects with a view to marriage. He owned the livery-stable, to be sure; but he was rather heavily in debt, and in no position to marry quite yet. He would have to wait.

Meanwhile, Alma Palmgren remained almost unaware of his existence. Within the year she became engaged to a young lawyer who had recently come to town and hung out his shingle. Presently that engagement was broken off. And then Alma went with her mother to visit the St. Louis Hoffmanns. Andrew's business went well. Alma returned to White Falls, unmarried. Andrew was now ready to begin his courtship.

2.

He knew by hearsay of the established methods of courting. The most respectable way to begin was to ask the young lady if you might call on her. After you had been calling on

her for a few months, and her parents had found nothing to disapprove in you, then you asked her to marry you. This was jocosely referred to as "popping the question." When you had asked her, and she had consented, you kissed her. Andrew knew that this method of courting was not the only one. There were fellows who never came to a girl's house, except perhaps as far as the front gate to whistle for her. There were those that took their girls buggy-riding and stopped in lonely places to spoon with them—Andrew had heard many coarse jokes from Mac about the "heel-and-toe marks" on the dashboard of the buggies he hired out to young fellows. True, these courtships usually ended at the altar, with the wedding only just in time maybe to save an open scandal. But right was right. Andrew was not one to whistle in front of a girl's house, as if he were afraid to go in and look her folks in the face. He had nothing to be ashamed of. The only way for him was to step right up to the girl and ask if he might come to see her. And after that, everything in its due order.

The only difficulty was that he had never in his life spoken to Alma Palmgren.

But that only made the beginning a little harder. After he had once spoken to her, the rest would be easy enough.

Her family went to the same church as himself. He would speak to her there.

So, after morning services the next Sunday, as she was about to climb into the family surrey beside her father, Andrew greeted her. First he said, "How do you do, Mrs. Palmgren," and "How do you do, Dr. Palmgren," and then, "How do you do, Miss Alma," with a stiff little bow to each, and his hat in his hand.

Mrs. Palmgren, who hardly condescended to look at anybody, did not look at him at all, but gave a slight nod in his general direction. Dr. Palmgren, who was in a hurry to get home, said "How d' do—how d' do," in his quick, preoccupied way. For quite different reasons, Andrew was nobody in particular to either of Alma's parents, being as good as anybody else to the one, and part of an undistinguished riffraff to the other.

And Alma, thus addressed by a youth whose sole mark of

identification in her mind had been his complete alienness from her, became momentarily uncertain as to his name and exactly who he was. She had lived away from White Falls more years, of late, than she had been there. It seemed as though he must be somebody she ought to know. She would have returned his greeting in any case; she was anxious not to offend as she had unwittingly done more than once since her return from abroad; and in her confusion, to be on the safe side, she smiled with an added touch of friendliness—which emboldened Andrew to pursue his task.

"May I come to see you some evening soon?"

She hesitated, in embarrassment. But he went on with his third speech, as prepared:

"I will see you home from church this evening, if that is convenient."

Alma looked at her mother for help, but her mother was paying no attention whatever. Her father was gathering up the reins impatiently; she could expect from him, in any event, no assistance in making social distinctions. She thought she knew, now, who this young man was. And she *wasn't* going to let him see her home from church. She turned to him, flushed with her annoyance, to say "No." Instead, with sudden amusement, she laughed, and said, "Why, yes!"

"Thank you," said Andrew. "Good day!" He gave another stiff little bow, and walked off.

Alma hastily climbed into the surrey. When the horses had started, she turned round to her mother and asked:

"Who was that?"

"Who was what?" her mother returned vaguely.

Her father, beside her, said, "Don't be silly, Alma. You know Andrew March."

"I thought that was who it was," she said. "But why should he be speaking to me?"

"Why shouldn't he?" her father asked severely.

"Did you hear him ask if he might see me home from church this evening?"

"Well, why not?" her father demanded.

"The only reason I can think of," said Alma, "for *his* calling on a girl is to propose to her!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Alma," said her father.

Her mother, in the seat behind, absorbed in her own private misery, the misery of having to live in such a place as White Falls, ignored the whole matter.

3.

Andrew had observed that Dr. Palmgren and his wife did not attend evening services at the church, but that Alma did, somewhat irregularly. During the brief period of her engagement to the young lawyer, she had been escorted home by him in a buggy, hired from Andrew. Andrew, with buggies at his command, nevertheless preferred to walk. He had always walked to and from church, and there was no good reason for any change now. He would wait for her at the door, and walk home with her.

He had to be at the stable to give some orders to his new stable-hand, and was a trifle late to church that evening. The first hymn was being sung when he entered and took his place in his accustomed back pew. The Palmgren family pew was up in front. He was disturbed not to see Alma there. However, she occasionally sat with some of her friends. His eyes roved the little church, seeking her. She was not there.

The minister knelt, and all heads were bowed. Andrew's thoughts strayed from their due course. Alma had not come. But she had promised. Therefore she would come. Andrew composed his mind, and listened to the minister's words as the sermon began.

The sermon was half finished when Alma entered and walked down the aisle to the family pew.

When the services were over, Andrew hurried outside. There by the door were standing half a dozen youths who did not go to church but who hung around outside waiting to take some girl home. They looked at Andrew in surprise and amusement as he, too, took up his station there. One of them, a fat youth called Christy, asked: "Well, Andy, who *you* waitin' for?"

"Never you mind," said Andrew coldly.

They lingered, whispering to their girls, curious to see whom Andrew might be courting. Alma came out at last. Andrew bowed awkwardly, raised his hat, and offered her his arm.

She took it and they walked away. "Well, I'll be dinged!" said Christy.

Andrew and Alma walked for a while in silence. She had a look that was at once proud, angry, and amused.

"You were very late to church," said Andrew.

"Yes," she said. And then—"I wasn't coming, at first."

"Why not?"

She shrugged her shoulders in the foreign way she had. "I didn't want to."

"But you came," he said complacently.

"Yes—after I had a quarrel with my mother."

"You shouldn't quarrel with your mother," he said gravely.

"You don't know my mother," she replied.

"But," said Andrew, "she is your mother just the same."

Alma shrugged her shoulders again.

Andrew felt that he should change the subject. "It was a fine sermon to-night," he said. "Though a trifle over-long."

Alma laughed nervously. "You didn't ask to take me home just to talk to me about the sermon—did you?"

"No," he admitted.

"Then why did you ask to take me home?" she demanded sharply.

"Oh," said Andrew, "that can wait a bit."

"No," she said, and paused in the moonlight. "This can be finished now. It has to be. I can't ask you in at home. What do you want?"

Andrew looked at her, and remembered what his mother had told him. Not to be afraid.

"I want to marry you," he said.

She burst out laughing.

"It's nothing to laugh at," he said rebukingly.

She continued to laugh. But the scornful note in her laughter had vanished, and she sounded a trifle hysterical.

He took her by the shoulder, and shook her. "Stop it!" he said.

"I—I'm not laughing at you," she said, and then became grave. "But it *is* funny," she added.

"What is funny?" Andrew asked severely.

"Me, I suppose," she explained. "I—I knew you were going to ask me to marry you! My father said I was ridiculous—

but I knew, this afternoon. And I thought—that it was absurd. And just a minute ago—I still thought so. But now—it doesn't seem so absurd."

"There's nothing absurd about it," said Andrew.

"I'm just realizing that," she said. "Unless—unless it's absurd the other way. Andrew—" she put her hands on his shoulders—"I'm—I'm rather a silly girl, you know! I mean, I'm proud—and romantic—and—and maybe it's just because you're different from the rest that I think I love you. Do you really believe—"

"Everything is all right," said Andrew reassuringly. "You're just the girl I want to marry."

"Well, then," she said, "why don't you—put your arms around me and—kiss me!"

He did.

"But I want you to know," he said, "that I'm able to support a wife. My livery-stable—"

She laughed. "I know all about you and your livery-stable, Andrew. I asked my father this evening before I came to church—what you were like. He said you were the finest young man in town. And I guess you may come home with me, after all. Be as nice as you can to my mother, because she'll be terribly upset!"

4.

They married just before the outbreak of hostilities between the North and South. Andrew's sympathies were not deeply engaged in this struggle. Let the young hotheads volunteer; he preferred to stay at home. But in the second year of the war, an Indian uprising occurred within the borders of his own state, beginning with a massacre of white farmers; this was a different matter, and Andrew joined a band of volunteers that campaigned with heavy losses throughout the fall and finally defeated the Indians at Forest Lake. He returned home with a collar-bone splintered by a bullet in that final battle. The next year a draft-law was passed, and one of the unlucky lots fell to Andrew. But according to the provisions of the law he had the choice of paying a bounty for a substitute; and this he accordingly did.

Meanwhile, Alma had borne him a golden-haired daughter, the first of four children.

The war made one important change in Andrew's business. There were by this time a number of railroad lines crossing the state, and wheat was beginning to be shipped eastward. Andrew had already begun to store wheat and sell it on commission for farmers. In the last year of the war this business was so profitable that he sold all his horses to the army, and devoted himself henceforth to grain. Mac's livery-stable had become a feed-store and grain-warehouse.

Within ten years after the war White Falls had become a large city, and Andrew, in spite of a nation-wide panic during one of those years, was a rich man. Andrew remembered his mother's advice, and continued to devote a tithe of his gains to the church. And living quietly and simply with his wife and children in the big house he had built on Fillmore street, he was happy.

His marriage had been successful. By the test of time Andrew had been proved better judge of womankind than could possibly have been supposed. The proud and romantic Alma turned out to have a sober housewifeliness which was exactly what Andrew desired. Their marriage was an idyl; a prose idyl no doubt, but one none the less beautiful to them both.

There were, of course, griefs to shadow their happiness. It would seem that rapid child-bearing had overtaxed Alma's somewhat frail constitution; after the birth of Bradford, another child was born dead, and she was incapacitated from further childbearing; not only that, but she was permanently weakened. She was too proud to let herself appear an invalid; she had the example of her mother's hypochondria to deter her from taking advantage of her ailments to gain sympathy.

It was not until they had been married fourteen years that Alma was obliged to give up her defiant pretence of health and take to her bed. She rose from that bed once, to bake a cake for her oldest boy's birthday, and then returned to it, a bed-ridden invalid. This shattering of her pride seemed to have made her lose interest in living; she was ashamed to be an invalid; she died at the age of thirty-seven, with her four children in their teens.

God, Andrew believed, had some obscure purpose in thus taking her from him. Andrew did not pretend to be able to understand it, but this devout conviction served to mitigate the shock of grief. He tried to accept his affliction humbly.

5.

Andrew often felt that if his wife had been longer spared, the children would have been different. The fact was, it was not until after her death that he had troubled to become acquainted with them. And it is possible that had she lived she might have interpreted them to him; for she understood them. She had been, all these years, Andrew's wife; but she remembered what she had been, the proud and foolish daughter of Dorothea Hoffmann; and they were like that old self of hers. Dolly was incurably frivolous. The boy John was ambitious, but not in his father's sober fashion—he was by temperament a gambler. Eddie was an idler and not ashamed of it. Little Bradford was a dreamer. No, they were not like their father.

Andrew, confronted for the first time by the fact of this alien brood, was bewildered, and remained so all his life. He could never quite accept, in all its immutability, the strangeness of his sons.

As for his daughter, the golden-haired Dolly, she seemed to him the girl her mother had been. And with that Andrew was, at first, content. She was having a good time now, as girls did; she would settle down when she was married.

Her youthful worldliness developed unchecked by any disapproval from her father. And three years after her mother's death, when she was nineteen, she married. It was then that her father first saw in her attitude toward life something more than a girlish echo of her mother's youth. She had been keeping company—her father's homely phrase—with young Royce, the banker's son, now himself a banker in St. Pierre; and her airs of condescension toward her suitor had amused Andrew. Well—that would pass. But Andrew did not like the way she talked about her plans of marriage. She almost seemed to be apologizing for her prospective husband. "After all," she said, "Dickie's people are the best in these parts!"

She was not apologizing for him—she was reproaching her father for lack of a wider opportunity. But he did not understand that. He felt like asking her in what way the Royces were better than any other honest, God-fearing people in White Falls or St. Pierre; but he chose to come nearer to the point that distressed him.

"Are you marrying Richard, or Richard's people?" he asked drily. . . . Her mother, if she were alive, might have advised her on the subject of marriage as his own mother had advised him—but he was scarcely equal to that.

Dolly shrugged her shoulders—her mother's girlish gesture, long since abandoned. And then she said impatiently, "I'm in love with Dick, if that's what you mean. But that's not the only thing to be considered."

"What else?" asked her father—for, after all, there were other things to be considered.

She laughed. "Dickie has promised to let me spend part of the winter down South somewhere. And for the hot months we shall go to White Swan Lake, of course."

Andrew took that in. For the last few years, he knew, a small class of people in St. Pierre and White Falls had been imitating the habits of metropolitan society. They held themselves apart from ordinary townspeople, and seemed to wish to forget the very existence of the hard-working Scandinavian and German farmers by whose toil they were enabled to live. They had little exclusive "sets"; they played cards together, and danced, as was considered in Chicago and New York the proper way of killing time; they "summered" and "wintered" away from home. White Swan Lake, some miles distant, was becoming the local fashionable summering place. Andrew had no idea that his daughter had adopted these frivolous notions.

"Maybe," he said, "you think that if we had moved to Chicago, as you tried to coax me to, you might have married a Chicago millionaire; and if we had gone to London, you might have married a lord or something!"

"It's no use talking about it," she replied. "Times have changed, that's all. I suppose you can't understand."

Andrew smiled grimly. "There are foolish people in every time," he said. "Children used to be ashamed of their parents, just as they are now—it's no new thing. And neither

is drinking and card-playing and dancing, and thinking your home town a poor place to live in. But I had hoped to have my own children brought up better than that. If your mother had lived . . . Well—I'll not scold you, for you're a girl and know no better. I'll leave that to your husband. He'll know how to tame you, I expect."

Thus Andrew shifted the minor burden of his daughter's gracelessness. But the problem of his three strange sons remained with him through life.

6.

Andrew remembered what his mother had said about giving his children a better education than he had. He took that to apply particularly to his sons, but he had been willing to send Dolly to the same college with them. But she held out for an Eastern finishing school; and failing to get her way, she preferred to stay at home. Her brothers had no choice—they mentioned Harvard in vain; they were sent in turn to the college that Dolly scorned, a neighboring Presbyterian institution toward the founding of which Andrew March had contributed.

John, immediately upon graduating from college, entered the business, and when, in the 'nineties, it was reorganized in a gigantic combine financed from Chicago and New York, it was John who negotiated the local arrangements by which the chief stockholders of the March company were let in on favorable terms, and he and his father made directors.

This youth,—for he was still under thirty when he negotiated that important deal—this youth, with his father's grave airs and lean features, but with an added sharpness as to the nose, and a mathematical frown in his forehead, was reputed to be a chip of the old block. But his father knew better. To Andrew, the business was as individual as a woman is to her lover, and as sacred. It had rewarded him because he understood it to the heart, and because he had been honest with it. But this new science of money-making, of dividend-paying, of which his son John was the exponent, a science in which intimate understanding of the business and honest treatment of it were alike unimportant, seemed to Andrew

sordid. He felt as a lover would feel who was offered a sure recipe for getting kisses from women at large. It offended his moral and romantic sensibilities. He would have preferred to stay out of the combine, and fight it, if necessary; but the business was already out of his sole control, and the other directors overruled him. He felt that he had been deposed in his own realm; and truth to tell, he had been. John, and not his father, was now in charge.

Meanwhile, Edward had entered the business upon finishing college. He was different from John, but not less alien from his father. He was interested in the business only as a source of income; he did not know how the money was made, and he did not care. He was an idler, like his sister Dolly. But, much to his father's astonishment, he was accepted as a valuable officer of the company—simply because he knew the sons and daughters of all the best people in town. Since the best people in town did not raise wheat, Andrew failed to see in what way this social acquaintanceship was a business asset. What! a young fool goes to people's houses, eats their food and drinks their wine, dances and plays cards with them and is called "Eddie," therefore he is a good business man! John tried to explain to his father. But Andrew refused to understand.

Bradford, the youngest boy, had scarcely the makings of a business man, of any sort, in him; he was too much of a visionary. . . . But he, too, should have his chance. Perhaps—Andrew said grimly to himself—pretty soon, maybe, having crazy ideas about things will be a business asset, like card-playing and dancing; and if so, Bradford ought to get on famously!

CHAPTER THREE: Bradford and Penelope

I.

BRADFORD MARCH, as a child, had admired his father tremendously; and if he did not exactly love him, it was because he was so much in awe of him. One cannot quite love such greatness and goodness as Andrew March represented to his children.

When they were very young, they were all under the spell of his moral grandeur. It was a cult, ministered to by their mother. They knew how he had got up at four o'clock, with the thermometer at fifteen below zero, and broken the ice in the water-pail with a hatchet; and how he had saved his money and put it in the bank, not forgetting to obey the last wishes of his dying mother and give his tithe to the church. On winter mornings when they came downstairs in their nightgowns to dress in front of the big fireplace, the thought of the mornings when their father had got up and dressed in the cold stable loft without any nice warm fire, was always present in their minds. They knew that they were fortunate children, and that they owed it all to their father. They were made to feel that they must be very, very good themselves, in order to be worthy of such a father. But they all knew in their hearts that they never could be quite good enough to deserve to be Andrew March's children. They grew up under the shadow of a secret sense of unworthiness; and in little Bradford this deepened early into a sense of guilt.

One day when he was seven, and his sister was helping him build a snow-man in the big back yard where they played after school, the matter of their father's heroism came up, as often before in their childish discussions. Dolly, with a sudden emergence of the critical faculty, remarked: "Fifteen degrees isn't so *terribly* cold. I'll bet it's almost that now!"

"I'll bet it isn't," said Bradford loyally.

"We'll look and see," said Dolly.

They went to the thermometer that hung outside the door on the front porch. It was five below zero.

"Ten degrees more isn't so *much* colder," said Dolly.

"It would be if you had to get up at four o'clock—without any fire—and—and break the ice in a pail to wash in!" said Bradford.

"I could do it!" said Dolly scornfully.

"Yes, you could!"

"All right—do you dare me?"

It seemed, somehow, a profanation to talk about doing such a thing on a dare. Bradford would not give her the challenge.

"I'll tell you," said Dolly, "let's all do it, to-morrow morning!"

She hunted up Johnny and Eddie and made her proposal. It interested them. It was more than an adventure, more than an experiment. It was, in some way that they could not understand but that they all felt, a defiance of the established order of things. Getting up at four o'clock and breaking the ice to wash in was a kind of sacred legend; it belonged to their father, it was a part of his remote and unapproachable greatness. And now they, his unworthy children, were planning to seize this greatness for themselves, as if to make themselves equal with him. They discussed the matter secretly all that afternoon and evening.

Their plans were laid so as not to arouse the suspicions of the parents. Secretly they managed to carry a pail of water and a hatchet to each of the two bedrooms; the three boys slept in one room, and Dolly in the adjoining one. An alarm clock was taken from the kitchen; Dolly was to put that under her pillow, so that it would wake no one but her, and she was to rap on the door to wake her brothers. The barometer promised colder weather when they went to bed, so that there was a possibility of its being almost, if not quite, fifteen degrees below in the morning. In those times fresh air was not considered necessary to health; at night, in cold weather, it was an evil to be avoided as far as possible, and they were accustomed to sleep with windows tightly closed. This time they opened them wide to the icy night. Bradford, in his cot, could hear his brothers talking in their bed, laughing and shiv-

ering in anticipation of next morning. . . . It seemed only a moment later when through his dream there came a far-away sound of knocking.

The sound wove itself into his dream—but a moment later Johnny was shaking him by the shoulder. He started awake.

The room was lighted by the faint shimmer of moonlight reflected from the snowy world outside. Johnny, in his night-gown, was standing over the water-pail with a hatchet. It seemed a grotesque and blasphemous mockery of a holy rite. Bradford shut his eyes. There was a tinkle of ice. He opened his eyes, and Johnny was plunging his hands in the water and splashing it on his face. Then he rubbed himself with a towel and began to get hastily into his clothes. He paused to give Eddie a shake. Eddie was asleep. "Wake up, you lazy hound!" he said.

Eddie awoke and looked around the room.

"Get up, it's your turn," said Johnny.

Eddie laughed. "Not me!" he said. "It's too cold!" and he snuggled beneath the bedclothes and shut his eyes.

"All right—I knew you'd back out," said Johnny. "Come on, Brad, you're not afraid. The cold water warms you up, that's a fact."

Brad *was* afraid, but not of the cold. He rose. The icy air made goose-flesh on his bare legs, but he did not mind that. He plunged his hands into the water and splashed it up into his face. It was cold, yes, but no colder than cold water ever was. He was disappointed. He had felt greatly daring, as if he had been about to savor the extreme agony of some antique martyrdom. And somehow he had missed it. *This* was not what his father had felt! . . . He got into his clothes.

There was another rap at the door, and Dolly's voice. "I'm all dressed—are you?"

"Yes—come in," said Johnny. She entered. "All but Eddie. Look at him," said Johnny scornfully. "I knew he'd back out!"

Dolly's face was flushed, her eyes bright, her hair loose and tangled about her shoulders. "Well," she said, looking from one to the other, "we've done it, and it didn't kill us!"

Only, Bradford thought, they *hadn't* done it! They hadn't

done what their father had done. They couldn't. All this was just a silly joke.

"Yes, we've done it," said Johnny. "Anybody could do it. But what's the use, if you don't have to?"

"That what I think," said Dolly, "and *I'm* going back to bed!" she laughed, and went into her room.

"Now that I'm up, I'm going for a walk," said Johnny, "and see if I've caught any rabbits in my trap over in the wood-lot. What are you going to do, Brad?"

"Oh, I guess I'll light a lamp and read a book," said Bradford.

2.

With that incident began the emancipation of Dolly and John and Edward from the spell of their father's greatness. Even Edward shared in its benefits. "I had more sense than any of you!" he said. But in Bradford's mind the old spell still held its power; and he was merely ashamed of his part in the vain mockery of their father's heroism.

It was not until he went to college that Bradford began to question the authenticity of his father's legend, and then only doubtfully and hesitantly. It was, moreover, only from books that he could get any guidance in such a matter; books alone had real authority over his thoughts. The teaching of economics in the latter 'eighties was still in a primitive state, and such accounts as were given of the origins of wealth corresponded on the whole to Andrew March's own pious ideas. Nevertheless, the touch of cold reason that was necessarily an ingredient of such studies had set Bradford to wondering. . . .

He did not know what the trouble was. He could not know that he wished for freedom to be himself, and that he would never quite achieve this freedom unless he could rid himself of the obligation to be his father over again.

He liked college, perhaps because it contained no father to remind him by his austere presence of his own unworthiness. He liked to study; he would have liked to teach—some not too technical subject, such as English literature. But his father expected him to go to work in the office when he was

through college; and so he would never mention to any one his own dream of a career.

While Bradford was at college in his senior year, John married. Bradford knew the girl. She lived in St. Pierre and belonged to the Royce set. Bradford knew that his father would fail to appreciate her ornamental qualities, would consider her merely useless. He rather sympathized with his father. He, too, felt that a woman should be good for something besides dancing and card-playing.

Within a few weeks after his brother's marriage, Bradford himself had fallen in love. The girl's name was Penelope. She was a freshman, from somewhere out in the country, and she was working for her board by waiting on table.

3.

Afterward, when they tried to fix the precise date when they first became interested in one another, they decided that it was the first time they talked together at President Kimball's house.

President Kimball of Scott college prided himself on being democratic. He had, besides the cook, no regular servants, but instead hired a few college students to work for him for their board and a small wage. A boy mowed the lawn in summer and tended the furnace in winter and did various odd jobs about the place. A girl met guests at the door, and at other hours helped with the housework. Another girl waited on table and washed dishes. On certain occasions these same students might be guests or assistant hostesses. The girl who waited on table this particular year was a young freshman, Penelope Rockford.

President Kimball's daughter, early in the school term, returned from Europe, and her engagement to Elwood Martin was announced. Elise Kimball was a girlhood friend of Dolly March, and Dolly and her husband were invited to dinner with Elise and her fiancé. But Mr. Royce was to be in Chicago on business, so Bradford was asked to come instead. It was, to Bradford at least, a dull occasion, and had a historic value in his mind only on account of the girl who waited on table that evening. Yet at the time he did not notice her.

It was President Kimball's custom to have each member of the senior class at his house at least once during the year. They were usually invited in small batches of two or three, on Sunday evenings; and that being the cook's day off, a buffet supper was served. So, a week or two after his previous visit to the Kimball house, Bradford was there again, with another boy. And this time, after serving the sandwiches, Penelope Rockford remained to talk to the guests.

It was this fact which first called her to Bradford's attention. He had seen this girl somewhere before, and he was at first embarrassed because he couldn't remember where. Then he remembered—she was the girl who had served the dinner here the other evening. That, rather than anything about her appearance, fixed her in his mind. Indeed, there was nothing about her appearance to draw attention to her. A face that one would hardly have thought of calling pretty, brown hair, and a slight, undeveloped figure: that was Penelope Rockford at sixteen.

But by a happy accident she had one thing in her favor, so far as Bradford was concerned. Whatever she was, she wasn't Elise Kimball. Bradford disliked Elise Kimball. In the earlier years of his college career, before she had gone abroad, she had pursued him with her attentions. Bradford would not have said so; he was not quite aware, at the time, what she was doing, except that she made life miserable for him for a while. Elise had made the usual mistake of talking to him about his father. He always had the feeling, when he was treated as his father's son, that he was in some way a masquerader. Elise plainly regarded him as a March. So he avoided her. In his own eyes it was a cowardly slinking away from the reminder of the seriousness of life. In her eyes it was the March pride, and as such she did not resent it.

To-night he saw Elise looking at him across the room in a way that warned him of what he might expect. A talk with Elise seemed, at this moment, too much to be borne. In deference to his supposed seriousness she was accustomed to become very serious herself, and to discuss with him the responsibilities of the best people, by which she meant the rich. She had suggested the other day at dinner that he should enter politics, with a view to purifying it. He wondered if she

really thought that her fiancé, Elwood Martin, was in politics with any such views; doubtless she did! But he had not been able to think of any good reply to her, and he feared that tonight she intended to renew the argument. His eye meeting hers went blank and his gaze vacantly traversed the room until it lighted upon the other girl, who happened to be Penelope. She was sitting on the sofa, the other youth beside her. Bradford went over to her. The other young man rose and hurried across to Elise. Bradford sat down in his place.

It was because of his desperate necessity for making conversation and appearing deeply interested, that he plunged at once into a theme that really interested him, though it might well have seemed a lame remark with which to open a conversation:

"What do you think of teaching, as a profession?"

"I think," said the girl promptly, "that it's the most interesting of the occupations so far open to women. I'm going to be a teacher," she added.

"Are you? Of what?"

She smiled amusedly. "Of everything, I'm afraid. I shall have to teach in a country school first."

"I'd rather like to teach, myself," he said, wistfully.

"Why don't you?" she asked.

"I don't know—" He hesitated, and then put his case. "You said a moment ago that teaching was the most interesting occupation open to women. Well, it *isn't* the most interesting one open to men; at least, it isn't supposed to be. With so many other things to do—"

Her gray eyes opened wider. "Yes," she said. "With railroads to build, and mines to dig—!"

"That's it," he said. Then he turned to her curiously. "If you were a man, I suppose you'd build railroads—or dig mines?"

"If I were a man," she said, "I'd do whatever I pleased!"

"You think you would."

"What I think is this: that if you want to teach, and I want to build railroads, it's a pity we can't both have our way."

"Oh," he said, "of course I *could* teach; but nobody would understand why. The only people who teach, it seems to me,

are those who can't do something else they'd rather do. Fuller, the English prof., told me he wished he'd been an engineer. In fact," he went on, "teaching is regarded as being—well, a little unmanly."

She laughed and looked at him. Unconsciously he squared his shoulders. From her gaze it would not seem that she thought him lacking in manliness.

"It's a stupid world, the way it's arranged," she said. "Perhaps it will be different, some day."

He gazed at her in his turn. The year was 1888. The doctrine of evolution, though made mention of in the biology course, was not yet officially recognized by Scott college. The idea, however, had made its impression on Bradford March's mind, and he had been trying in an awkward amateur way to apply it to other fields of knowledge. In so doing he had received no encouragement from his college studies. It was generally believed that the world had arrived, through God's mercy and by the aid of His chastening, at something near to earthly perfection, at least in America; beyond was Heaven, of course—but that was all. Bradford had tried to talk to a few people about his ideas; he had even presented some of them humbly to his father. But no one had ever understood what he was talking about. He had been inclined to suspect that the possession of such ideas was another mark of his own inferiority to the sturdy breed of men who had built this great nation and its glorious institutions. He had even made a shamed resolve not to speak of these ideas to any one again.

And here was this young girl calmly talking about the world as a stupid place, capable of being vastly changed!

At this moment Elise bore down upon him roguishly. He rose, parted from the girl on the couch with a long glance, and surrendered to the inevitable. It was odd, this time he did not mind being talked to about his father and the responsibilities of our best people. It was as if he had a secret that sustained him. And he did have such a secret—the knowledge that he was not, after all, alone.

4.

They met again, after that, inevitably. The interrupted

conversation had to be finished. . . . Only, their conversations never were finished, it seemed.

It was wonderful, Bradford found, to be able to talk—without fear of “giving himself away.”

As for Penelope, her emotions were troubled and discordant. She had inquired on the campus who that shy, dark-haired boy was; and when she learned that he was the son of Andrew March, she decided she would not like him. She never expected to be put to the test; but the improbable had quickly happened. The first time, as the maid waiting on table, she had thought his conversation uncommonly stupid. The next time it was her duty to be nice to him; nevertheless, her remarks had been at first in the nature of a challenge. He had responded to this challenge in a way that, if he had not been the son of Andrew March, would have captivated utterly her proud, lonely heart. As it was, she thought him different from all the other men she had ever known—excepting only one, and that one dear to her, an old doctor back at home. Bradford talked to her, as the old doctor had talked to her, about things that really mattered.

She would have been in love with him, if she had let herself. But she wouldn't let herself, because Bradford was—who he was. They were merely friends.

Still, it was pleasant to know that she had made something of a sensation in the college. She, an unknown girl freshman, had captured a senior and the son of the great Andrew March. They were together everywhere; they walked, skated, went to dances and parties, sat together at the Thanksgiving game; they called each other Pen and Brad, and were known as hopelessly “gone” on one another. But Penelope did not take it too seriously. She knew—if the others didn't—that not a word or gesture of love-making had passed between them.

She wondered a little at it. Not that she cared! It was, of course, much better that it should be this way. She was glad that he, like herself, was capable of a disinterested friendship with one of the opposite sex. And yet, sometimes she wouldn't have minded if he were only a little bit less impersonal. . . . Finally, as spring came on, she was obliged to admit shamelessly to herself that she *did* want him to kiss

her. She looked at herself in the glass. She was almost seventeen; she had grown prettier—even if she wasn't what some people would call a beauty. . . .

One May night, as they were walking homeward down a shady street after a party, she paused. "Brad!" she said, in a voice that trembled, and put her hand on his arm.

Then her pride rebelled. She couldn't be so brazen.

But it wasn't necessary. In a moment she was gathered in his arms, and was being kissed with a passion that amazed her. He must have wanted to all along!

Afterward he confessed as much. "Why didn't you?" she asked wonderingly. "I was afraid of you," he told her. "You absurd old thing!" she said tenderly.

But now all they said was—"Pen darling!" "Brad *dear!*"

The next evening he asked her to marry him.

She had lain awake the night before and decided that it wouldn't be decent to take the traditional feminine advantage of the situation. It would seem as though *that* were what she had been trying for all the time—and it wasn't. She would say no if he asked her.

"You needn't think you have to marry me, just because you kissed me!" she said scornfully.

"But I love you," he said. "Don't you love me?"

She didn't want to tell him.

He was hurt.

She saw his hurt and relented a little.

"You must wait till we've been away from each other a while," she said. "You may change your mind."

"I'll never change my mind," he said.

"Besides," she went on, "we can't be married for a long time, anyway. I must finish college."

"Is that so important?" he asked, hesitantly.

"Of course it is!" she said emphatically.

If he had asked her why it was so important, she couldn't have told him; she couldn't remember why. That was the reason she was so emphatic about it. But he didn't ask, fortunately. That would only have made her angry.

"All right," he said. "I'll wait."

"And then," she stipulated, "I'll have to teach school a couple of years."

He looked at her in bewilderment.

"You see," she explained, "I borrowed some money for my tuition; and I must pay it back."

"How ridiculous!" he said. "You must let me pay it back."

"It isn't ridiculous," she said. "I can't have you *buying* me."

"But—five years!" he protested.

"We can write to each other," she said.

"And you won't fall in love with anybody else in the meantime?" he demanded desperately.

"Oh, we'd better not make any rash promises. If in five years we still want to get married—why—"

And that, after many futile arguments from him, was where they left it when she went home in the summer—except for the promise implicit in a long farewell kiss.

5.

Afterward, Bradford March liked to think that he had never for a moment wavered in his determination. He forgot the day he talked with his sister.

"Well, Brad, I hear you've a sweetheart at college," she said.

"Yes," he affirmed soberly.

"She's a nice little thing, I hear," said Dolly.

He stirred uneasily in his chair. That description put Penelope in a false light, he felt.

"It's about time you got acquainted with some girls," Dolly went on. "There's one here I want you to meet—just home from school in the East. You'll be crazy about her. Millicent Page—I expect you remember her as a little girl in pigtaails. But she's grown up now, and very gorgeous."

Bradford considered his position in silence for a moment. He couldn't truthfully say that he was engaged to Penelope, because he wasn't. But he had to make some defense against his sister's too obvious campaign.

"The fact is," he said, "I'm in love with this—this girl."

"That's all right," said Dolly cheerfully. "Who said you weren't?"

"And I want to marry her," he amended.

"Of course, that's quite natural," said Dolly. "One always wants to marry one's first sweetheart." She smiled sympathetically.

"Well—I'm going to," said Bradford.

"Really, Bradford?" She twinkled mischievously.

"Yes—really."

"You *are* hard hit. Who is she? I heard the name, but it meant nothing to me, and I've forgotten."

He told her the name.

"Who are her people?" she asked. "Where's she from?"

"Her father runs a drug-store up at Huntersville. What difference does that make? Grandmother March was a cook in a boarding-house."

"Yes, I suppose Grandfather needed a cook. Is this girl a good cook?"

"I don't know. And I don't care."

"You might tell me something about her, Brad. After all, I'm your sister, and naturally I'm interested."

"You wouldn't like her," he said. He smiled. "She wants to build railways."

"Really!"

It did sound nonsensical. He was sorry he had said it. But there wasn't anything he could say about Penelope. In Dolly's eyes, everything about their romance would look foolish.

"Is she pretty?" Dolly asked softly.

He hesitated again. "I think she's beautiful," he said. "But you wouldn't."

"I'm *trying* to be nice to you, Brad. Would you like me to invite your sweetheart here for—say a week-end?"

"She probably wouldn't come," he said.

"But why not?" Dolly's eyebrows lifted. "Surely her manners—if she's a college girl—!"

He laughed. "You're on the wrong track, Dolly. You don't understand. And you never will. You'd better leave me and my sweetheart alone. At any rate, you've nothing to worry about for the present. We can't be married for a long time. And we're not even—officially engaged. She's to finish college first. Three more years."

"Oh!" Dolly was puzzled.

"I said you wouldn't understand."

"I don't. But anyway, you've not taken vows not to look at any other girls in these three years, have you?"

"No," he said reluctantly.

"Then I'm quite satisfied," said Dolly. "You can marry any one you please, Brad; but I want you to have a look around, first. If in three years you still prefer your college sweetheart—why, then—!" She laughed. And she added, "Even though I don't know her, I'm sure she is a nice girl, from what you've told me. She knows—well, she knows what the world is like, and she's saving her pride from a blow that no girl would like."

It seemed that way to Bradford when he left his sister's house. Penelope had understood exactly what would happen, and had wished to save her pride. She had guessed at the Millicents—and all the others—that would be put in his way. Three years—worse than that, five years!—was a long time. He was, he supposed, only human. He could—it was conceivable that he could—fall in love with somebody else in five years. Penelope's image would fade, in the long months when they could not see each other—with nothing but letters to remind him of her. Letters! It was absurd. If she had only let him be engaged to her, then he would have had some protection against the crowds of Millicents. But she wouldn't be engaged. He knew that. He was left in a false, ridiculous, impossible situation.

6.

He saw it all. He had had his youthful romance. And his sweetheart had been too wise to attempt the impossible. Such a thing was too beautiful to last. He was doomed to marry a Millicent—one or another of them, as it might chance to turn out. . . . It made no difference which one. . . .

He had renounced Penelope, in his mind, given her up, resigned himself to his fate, when he reached home and found a letter from her. Her first letter, not counting hasty notes. And it breathed herself in every line. It was living talk, true, intimate, impatient, her very speech.

In the same instant he realized two things; that he had to have her, and that he could. He had thought of her as cut off from his world; but that wasn't true unless he chose to make it so! She was different from Dolly's friends, yes; but that difference was for him. She could exist in that world, tolerate it, endure it, as well as he could. He had thought of Scott college as separated by an impassable gulf from his home; actually, he had gone from one to the other every day! The gulf had existed merely in his thoughts. No wonder she had refused to be engaged to him, when he had never invited her to his home. She must have thought he was ashamed of her. . . .

After a sleepless night he went back to his sister. "Dolly," he said awkwardly, "I've changed my mind. I want you to invite Penelope here for a few days. She's gone home to her folks, but she'll be back for summer school. So if you'll ask her to come, before you go away for the summer—?"

Dolly was puzzled again. "It's going to be a big party, you know, Brad," she warned him. "All the world will be here Saturday night—including all the family and the in-laws. Are you willing to have her—run the gauntlet?"

"That's all right," said Bradford. "Bring them all, and Millicent, too, if you like."

"Does—does Penelope dance?" asked Dolly. She had about decided that Brad's sweetheart was a bluestocking.

"Of course she dances," said Brad. "She does all the regular things. There's nothing queer about her. Only let her know in time to fix up something to wear."

7.

Penelope's triumph, if it could be called a triumph, was a very quiet one. Dolly was by no means reconciled to this unpretentious stranger as a wife for Brad. But Penelope was at least unobjectionable in a social way. In fact, considering that she was a plain little thing, she got along amazingly well. And the Iversons, a young couple who providentially lived in Scott Park, near the college, took a great liking to her. In them, Bradford's romance had found friends. The Iversons were going to be at home all summer, and a vista of delightful

week-end companionships under their auspices was offered to the lovers' gaze. The imaginary gulf between their worlds had been bridged.

And perhaps Penelope might prove less stubborn. . . .

But she was, all the more determinedly, perhaps because of these mitigations of their loneliness, just as stubborn as she had threatened to be. There were quarrels and reconciliations; but always Bradford yielded to her fierce pride.

Bradford sometimes thought of his father, who had married Alma Palmgren within a month of their first conversation. He wondered why he, Andrew March's son, could not tame this girl, make her less jealous of her freedom. "I said—five years . . ." she told him. And she reminded him—"You said you would wait. . . ."

Five years! Dolly had long since given up any other plans for her brother. It was plain that he never could see anything in any one except his Penelope. Dolly only wished the silly girl would marry him and have it over with.

Penelope finished college; she taught school to pay back the money she had borrowed for her tuition. And then they were married.

Everybody was glad. It was hoped they would be sensible, now they *were* married. But Nelly Iverson said: "No, she won't. Not in the way you mean, Dolly. Penelope's a rebel."

CHAPTER FOUR: Time's Changes

I.

PENELOPE ROCKFORD had begun her rebellion as a girl in Huntersville, one of the tiny villages that dotted the wheat region to the north and west of White Falls and St. Pierre. She was the eldest daughter of a large family of sons and daughters. Her mother was, like most of the inhabitants of that region, Scandinavian—a robust Swedish housewife. Her father was of old American stock, and very proud of the fact, though he himself was but a poor example of that stock. He had failed at a number of different things in a number of little towns in this region, and with each failure he moved his continually increasing family to another town. In Huntersville he was doing better than usual, because he had two almost grown sons to assist him in his business and work at odd jobs besides. His business, this time, was a drug-store; among farmers and farmers' wives one could always drive a thriving trade in liniments and patent medicines. Even so, and in spite of a breezy manner that seemed to denote prosperity, he made so meager a living for his large family that his wife had to eke out their income by selling butter and eggs to the neighbors, and by doing simple dressmaking. Penelope helped her mother with the dressmaking.

Mr. Rockford was fond of making jokes about Scandinavian industriousness. That was one reason why his business was so poor; the Scandinavian farmers preferred to buy their medicines, even at the cost of some inconvenience, over at Morgan Hill, rather than listen to Mr. Rockford's jokes about them. The truth was, of course, that this Scandinavian industriousness, and the success it brought, reminded him of his own inefficiency and his many failures; and he had to protect himself against the humiliation of the comparison by making a joke of it.

In his home, it was as one of the superior sex that he posed.

The exaggerated praise which he gave his wife was given to her as a woman. He was really, no doubt, proud of her strength, her ability, her patience, and even her fecundity. "It certainly was a good day's work, Ma, when I picked you out!" he would say, emphasizing his tribute by playfully slapping her broad back or flanks as she came in from the kitchen with a steaming boiled dinner in her hands; and sitting down at the table, he would glance proudly around at the crowd of children she had borne him. Sometimes he pretended to have forgotten how many there were, and would count them up—"Seven? Only seven? Ah, there's one I missed! Eight. That's better!" And presently it was nine, and then ten.

As Penelope began to grow up, he singled her out for similar tributes. She'd soon be fifteen, and the boys would be after her quick enough. She'd make a good match, all right.

That was the point; she would make a good match with one of the prosperous young Swedish farmers in the neighborhood. Penelope got from these jokes which tormented and embittered her youth, the idea that she was a commodity, and that her marriage would be in the nature of a business deal between her father and that young farmer—a deal profitable to both. The young farmer would acquire her services, including her "cleverness"; and her father, as she did not fail to gather from his remarks, would get something of value in return. What her father seemed to have in mind was a "loan" which would enable him to "enlarge his stock" and bring his drug-store up-to-date, like the ones in White Falls and St. Pierre. And he had his eye on a young fellow, the son of the richest farmer in the country, as a match for his little Penelope. . . .

During her sensitive pubescence she was haunted with the idea that she was growing up merely to be offered in marriage as an attractive bargain.

What little Penelope did not realize was that these coarse jokes *were* jokes—her father's heavy kind of wit. What she did realize, though her father would indignantly have denied it, was the seriousness of these jokes. He had been known to say, "These Swedes haven't got any sense of humor—they don't know how to take a joke." Certainly his daughter Penelope didn't.

The young Swede, Svend Hansen, concerning whom Penelope was usually teased, was growing up to be a handsome, strong, attractive young man; he obviously liked Penelope—and she might easily have fallen in love with him, except for these family jokes of her father's. As it was, she fiercely resolved never to marry anybody.

And she wasn't going to stay at home, either, and work for her father. She would run away from home. So she decided at fourteen. What she would do when she had run away, she didn't know.

When she was fifteen, she became acquainted with the crusty old town doctor, who talked to her kindly and seriously, and lent her books. One of these was Mill's "On the Subjection of Women." Thenceforth Penelope identified her own lot with that of her sex; and from her talks with the old doctor her vague plans of escape took definite form. She was going to become a teacher.

Her father did not object to that, for it meant an addition to the family income. But here the doctor intervened with the offer of a loan that would pay her tuition through one of the small colleges in the state. . . . Penelope would never cease to be grateful to him for that practical help toward her emancipation.

Penelope's mother understood, and encouraged her escape. But her father was indignant at this desertion. Penelope had to remind herself that there were two boys, older than herself, to help support the family. There was a battle, lasting from the time her plans were announced until the time she went away to college. It was a one-sided battle, conducted by Mr. Rockford not only against Penelope, but against her mother, for letting the girl get such foolish ideas into her head; and even against her rather frightened sister, Sigrid, for egging her on to make a fool of herself. "I know what you're up to, you want her to go away so that you can steal her beau." To this campaign Penelope made no defense; she sat cutting and stitching the clothes she was going to wear at college.

Her father said solemnly to her as she bade them good-by, "Mark my words, you'll rue the day you left your father's roof to go wild-goose-chasing after such nonsense. Many's the time you'll think of the happiness that might have been yours!"

And, deeply affected by the imaginary picture in his mind of Penelope with Svend's children clustered around her knees, he began to cry. Penelope knew well enough what he was crying about; she looked at her mother's brood—there were eleven of them now—and in her own mind she bade a scornful adieu to such happiness for ever.

2.

That year Mr. Rockford's business did worse than ever; and Mrs. Rockford, with undiscouraged fecundity, was going to have another baby. Sigrid (fifteen years old) promptly captured Svend and married him; but Svend's father had unkindly refused Mr. Rockford a loan. All that year there came eloquent letters from him to his undutiful daughter, demanding that she return home; reminding her of what she owed to her parents; hoping that she had by this time seen the folly of her ways; and suggesting that she could probably get part of her tuition remitted, it would come in handy at the store. Penelope's mother wrote cheerfully, too cheerfully for Penelope's peace of mind, of the family situation, saying that they would pull through all right; adding all the village gossip; and only once, in answer to a direct query from Penelope, touching upon the idea of Penelope's return: "I don't want that you give up your plans for me or anybody."

Penelope's love for Bradford was a thing apart from these family troubles. Besides, until that first kiss, it was only friendship. And when he wanted to marry her, the thought of what that marriage would do for her mother and the new baby, occurred to her only to make her reject it fiercely. Perhaps, but for that situation, she would have married Bradford March then and there. But she had refused once to be a commodity, sold to help her father out of his economic difficulties; and she had to refuse now, lest she should have to fear that such sordid motives had entered into her love.

In the five subsequent years, at times stormy enough, of their courtship, she doubted herself more than once; but, doubting, she clung fast to her original purposes, such of them as had not already been abrogated by her promise to Bradford. These plans had been made when she was sure of what she

wanted. It had seemed crystal clear to her, once, that she must let nothing interfere with college; nor with paying back, in her own money, earned by teaching, the loan that Doctor Parks had made her—more especially as she knew that he didn't care whether she did or not. Then, these plans carried out, she might take the happiness which had now come to seem to her more important than anything else.

It was fortunate that no one in Huntersville knew, and that her father never learned through all these years, of her romance with Bradford March. Just before they were married, she had a letter from her father; no eloquent reproach this time, but a self-congratulatory letter celebrating his long-delayed triumph in the struggle for success! He had bought some stock in a Colorado mine, it was beginning to pay dividends, and very soon he expected to be a rich man; but she, ungrateful girl, need not expect to share in this good fortune—after the way she had treated them all, she could shift for herself. "I told you," he wrote, "that you would regret the day you left your father's roof."

Then it was that Penelope got over her Swedish inability to take a joke. For the first time, she laughed at her father. She ceased to see him as an ogre whose power must be at all costs defied, or an embodiment of age-old masculine tyranny. She saw him as a ridiculous little man who had asserted the traditional masculine authority over his women so earnestly because—precisely because—he was so lacking in the traditional masculine power to take care of them. He had felt a continual need of reassuring himself that he was indeed a man. It was not only ridiculous, it was pathetic. She was glad she would henceforth be in a position to help her mother and sisters, and him, too, poor little man!

3.

Oddly enough, it was Bradford, with his queer ideas about the world, who came nearest to pleasing his father. On finishing college, he had gone to work to learn the business. Under his father's direction he had worked by turns in the office, in the field as a buyer, and on the distributing end of the business. The shyness which had afflicted him in the pres-

ence of his brothers' and sister's friends vanished when he was talking to farmers, country bankers, railroad executives, mill-owners; like his father, he respected ordinary people, and much more than his father he had an instinctive liking for them. The March prestige assisted him, no doubt; and if he still felt a little of his old boyish sense of personal incapacity, no one would have guessed it. When he was twenty-seven, just after his marriage, he was made treasurer of the St. Pierre branch of the company, at the suggestion of his brother John. The post had fallen vacant, and it was felt by the stockholders that the March name would adorn it; while as between Edward and Bradford, it was the latter to whom the March tradition of good sober judgment had become attached.

"You have more sense than that I'd have credited you with," said Bradford's father, upon more than one occasion; and once he added—"I'm not sure but that you're the best of the lot."

Dolly had made many efforts to draw her young brother into the circle which more and more she ruled; and when his marriage was finally in prospect, she made another effort. "I've found just the place for you and Penelope to live," she said; "in Marion Park—and on Highland Avenue." Marion Park was now the aristocratic suburb of St. Pierre, and Highland Avenue its most select street. Dolly herself lived there. "The Maxwells are going to Europe for a year. Ordinarily they'd shut up the house; but they'd let it to *you*. And meanwhile you can be planning to build for yourself."

"I think," said Bradford, "that we've already pretty definitely decided to live in Scott Park. The Iversons and the Tuckers and the Wolfs, all our best friends, live there."

"Who are the Tuckers and the Wolfs?"

"Nobody you'd like to know, I'm afraid."

"You do have the strangest friends—not that I've anything against the Iversons.—But I think you ought to take everything into consideration. How does Penelope feel about it? Wouldn't she rather be *in* things? You know, really, she has quite a social gift; and if you gave her the chance—!"

"She feels as I do about it."

"Oh, well—if you prefer to live in a stuffy college suburb!"

4.

Scott Park, a suburb of St. Pierre lying between that city and White Falls, was not in any sense stuffy, except to the disdainful nostrils of Dolly and her circle. Of late years it had more and more come to be inhabited by people who moved there so that their children could go to college and keep their home life. And these were augmented by couples who fell in love with each other at college, married, and settled down there. This had been true of the Iversons; it was true of the Tuckers and the Wolfs. And Bradford and Penelope, by following their example, were to help make it a college tradition.

The Iversons, the Tuckers, the Wolfs—they were, remarkably so, people of Bradford's and Penelope's own sort. The wives had a common bond in having desired something more than the conventional lot of womankind. College had been, to each of them, part of a youthful program of rebellion, emancipation, self-realization. And they had this in common, too, that they had given up their plans for careers and economic independence, and become happily married. But if they had given up without much regret their defiant early hopes, it had not been an abject renunciation of their principles; their surrender was to love and not to convention, for the men they married had been men who sympathized with their rebellion, perhaps loved them for it.

Their principles were vague enough, amounting to scarcely more than a discontent with the customary field of womanly endeavor. And yet, the justice of their cause being recognized by their husbands, they brought to this customary field of womanly endeavor, the home, all the passionate devotion and the critical intelligence which they had intended to consecrate to their careers. They were by no means discontented wives. They were young women of exceptional energy and gifts of mind, who, lacking a world to make over, were engaged in humanizing the ancient institution of family life.

They had already begun to make of it something new—new to the Middle West, at least—when Bradford and Penelope married. And the chief element in that newness was the unwillingness of these young parents to feel themselves grown

up, an unwillingness to assume within the home the traditional gravity and austerity expected of parents in their relations with their children. They wished to remain young; and so, inevitably, their children had more freedom. They were, parents and children, on remarkably easy and informal terms with one another. Bradford and Penelope agreed that it made being parents seem rather like fun.

The question of children had come up more than once during their courtship, and Bradford had been distressed by Penelope's attitude. Sometimes he thought she must be afraid of having children, although it was hard to associate her with fear of any sort.

And it was true that Penelope had been afraid, not of having children, but of having a child every year, like her mother. She was afraid of having her ambitions, her hopes, her dreams, utterly destroyed by the relentless and endless process of childbearing. That, though she herself did not quite realize it, was why she had postponed her marriage with Bradford and gone on year after year at college and teaching, until the end of that blessed respite of five years—that respite which she had so fiercely demanded, which her lover had so generously conceded, and which her own eagerness for love's fulfillment had made it so hard for her to take. She assumed that she would inherit her mother's fecundity. She knew that some women had only a few children; and she knew of women who wanted children but never had any. She wondered vaguely at this. But it wasn't until her wedding with Bradford was being planned, that Nelly Iverson discovered the depths of her practical ignorance.

"Why! You little goose! How old are you? Twenty-two? And you don't know—!"

Nelly broke off to laugh deliciously.

"I know all about—about *having* babies," said Penelope. "I've always known *that*. But I didn't know there was any way to keep from having them. Except by not—not being really married."

Nelly enlightened her.

"But—but then—" said Penelope, as this new knowledge reverberated through her mind, "women can be married, and have careers too!"

"Of course!" said Nelly. And then, sighing—"But generally they don't. It's so much fun having babies."

Yes, Penelope could see that. It might be fun, if you didn't *have* to have them; if you could have them when you wanted them. Yes. . . . But—

She lay awake all night with this new idea—that she could be married and still have her career. What career? She had given up her career already. Teaching hadn't been a career—it had been only a way of putting off marriage a little longer. She was going to be Brad's wife. That was her career. And children? Perhaps. . . .

"Do you want us to have children right away?" she asked him.

"Is there something you'd rather do?" he asked.

"I don't know. I guess not. And if you'd like it—I think perhaps it would be fun."

"I'd like," said Bradford, slowly, "to have a son. He would be named after me. He would be me over again—only different. I'd like to see what I *would* have been. . . . A poet, or a writer, perhaps, who knows?"

"You shall have a son!" said Penelope, gaily.

5.

Two years after their marriage a child was born, a boy, with his mother's brown hair and blue eyes. He was named Bradford, and called Junior. He was the most beautiful boy-baby that ever came into the world, they were sure of that.

At fourteen months he was walking, and conversing with his adoring parents in a language which they professed to be able to understand.

It *was* fun, seeing *him* grow up, year by year!

A peculiar problem had arisen to distress Bradford, in connection with his work. It was not a problem that would have distressed a less sensitive person; to his brother John it was no problem at all. Some political trouble-makers, in their effort to arouse discontent among the farmers, were criticizing the arrangements by which prices for wheat were adjusted. At first Bradford had not been clear, himself, as to the nature of these arrangements. There were various

grades of wheat, which were paid for at the elevator according to their comparative values, and these values were in turn determined by the millers; the range of the whole scale, of course, being fixed by the condition of the wheat market as registered in the buying and selling in the Chicago wheat-pit. There had long been a vague discontent among the farmers over the control of the price of wheat by "Chicago gamblers"; Bradford's father had shared this discontent, and Bradford had inherited a sympathy with the farmers' point of view in this matter, though he had learned at college to regard the wheat-pit as a useful, if crude, mechanism for price determination. He wished that things could be differently arranged, but did not see very well how they could be, except by some age-long process of gradual change. But this new grievance which the farmers were being taught to feel, struck nearer home. It concerned, not the price of wheat in general as fixed by the market, but the comparative prices paid for various grades of wheat at the elevator.

The difficulty, in Bradford's mind, was that there was a certain justice in the farmers' complaints. The condition complained of had grown up naturally, and without any intention to defraud anybody. The different grades of wheat had originally been of different value. Wheat affected with smut, for example, was of slight value; but as the processes of milling were improved, it became possible to remove all trace of smut from the wheat at the same time that the bran was removed, so that smut did not really affect the value of the wheat. The price, however, remained low; and this, according to the current theory of business, was only just—since it was by the enterprise of the millers that a comparatively useless kind of wheat had been made of use. Accordingly, the rewards of this enterprise should accrue to the millers; and it did. . . . But it would, of course, be hard to get a discontented farmer to see the justice of this.

And there were matters even harder to explain. A certain inferior grade of wheat had at first been entirely rejected; and then uses were found for this "rejected" wheat, and it was bought for a pittance; but with the most modern methods of milling, this "rejected" wheat might actually be made to yield the most important and useful ingredients of the best

flour! The discrepancy between the price of "rejected" wheat and the price of the best flour made it rather hard to see the reasonableness of this arrangement, even in the light of current business theory. . . . But even this was not the worst.

The finest wheat, it was said by the trouble-mongers, was sometimes pronounced "rejected" and bought for less than the cost of raising it. This Bradford refused to believe until it was proved to him. And even then, there was a reason, of a sort, for this apparent injustice. The market was overloaded with wheat, and any more buying, except of "rejected" wheat, was out of the question. As a favor to the farmers, or so it was considered by the millers and the elevator men, vast quantities of wheat were bought at the "rejected" price. Otherwise, they pointed out, it could not have been bought at all. . . . But still, the fact remained that the grading of wheat was a kind of farce.

This painful fact had been brought to Bradford's attention somewhat dramatically. A young chemist in the state agricultural college had been so rash as to address a meeting of discontented farmers, and give these charges the sanction of his scientific authority. A scandal had ensued, and the young chemist was discharged from his position. Bradford had sent for him, in order to find out if he had really said what he was reported to have said. The young chemist confirmed these reports, and told Bradford things which he did not know about the conduct of his own business—things which Bradford, at first incredulous, took the trouble to investigate, only to find that they were true. . . . John was brutally candid about these conditions. "What of it?" he asked. "Did any one suppose we were running this business for the farmers' benefit?"

"Does—father know about these things?" asked Bradford.

"Of course."

"What does he think of them?"

"You'd better ask him."

And this, oddly enough, was the crux of that painful situation to Bradford. His father, of course, knew about these things; and, of course, he must have approved of them. . . . And perhaps his father was right. Perhaps his own oversensitiveness was absurd. He did not want to ask his father

about this matter—perhaps for fear of proving to his father that he was a fool, after all—perhaps for fear of discovering that his father was not the moral hero of his childhood imagination. . . . It did not occur to Bradford to try to change these things; he accepted, without shame, his individual helplessness in the face of the huge, complex, and relentless machinery of modern business. This was the order of the world, and he had never thought of himself as one born to set it right. . . . His home, his child—these were matters in which he could be a creator, a controller of destinies. The outside world must be, doubtless, what it was. And what gave him his feeling of impotence was simply his inability to go to his father and argue it out.

And it was this painful personal emotion, rather than any active dissatisfaction with the order of the world, which made him for a year or two cherish secretly the dream of leaving the business. . . . But if he did, he would have to explain to his father. And he could not get up his courage to tell him the truth. He was trying, all this time, to think of some good excuse, which would satisfy his father, and leave the real issue untouched. . . . Yet he was not quite content with this plan; and sometimes he would sit at his desk and dream of confronting his father—of telling him all he thought and felt about the world. . . .

These dreams were brought to an end by a tragedy in his domestic life. When Junior was six years old, he became dangerously ill with diphtheria. Penelope was going to have another baby, and could not be with the sick child. And in spite of everything that could be done, Junior died.

6.

It took all their philosophy, all their realism, to reconcile themselves to this intrusion of merciless and meaningless chaos into their lives.

If they afterward lacked something of the blithe self-confidence with which they had at first addressed themselves, within this domestic sphere, to the creation of a beautiful, ordered and significant world of their own, it was due to this

reminder of the blind chaos which rules the universe, and is indifferent to our human efforts.

But they resolved that the new baby should not be punished by the grim trick that chance had played upon them. They would not cling vainly to a memory; they would live in the present, and cherish what was theirs to cherish. They would forget, for the sake of the child that was to be born, the hopes that had been frustrated by malign accident.

Then Janet was born.

She was a sturdy child. She had her father's black hair. She would grow up to be tall and strong and splendid.

Janet helped them to forget.

7.

But the hurt had been deep.

During the year after Janet's birth, Bradford March had a nervous breakdown. The family went to Winga Bay, on Lake Minnewinga, and lived a healthy outdoor life all summer. The Iversons were already there—and new friends, the Vances. The Tuckers came. Bradford March grew well again.

That winter, not yet wishing to return to the office, he took a special post-graduate course under a brilliant new teacher of sociology at Scott college. The next fall he went back to work.

They decided to have a place of their own at Winga Bay, and live there every summer, for Janet's sake. Bradford built a house—a sort of house—and worked on it himself. At a certain stage, when it could be lived in, he sent the carpenters away, and provided himself with work for several summers to come, finishing it. It remained always a rough-looking affair; but it was pleasant to live in.

It was near the beach, and they all spent a large part of every day in the water. Little Janet learned to swim not long after she learned to walk. The Vances had a tennis court. The Iversons had a small sailboat, and Bradford bought a big motor-boat. The Tuckers came, with a passion for fishing. They all, within a few years, had cars. They danced on Saturday nights, and picnicked on Sunday, grown-

ups and children. They declined invitations to bridge-parties. They were all young together.

They had come to call each other by their "little names." Mr. and Mrs. Iverson were Pete and Nelly. The Tuckers were Dave and Molly. The Vances were Loo and Lutie—for Luke and Lucinda. And little Janet, hearing her parents referred to as Brad and Pen, adopted these names for them as soon as she was able to talk. She addressed the other members of the little group with an equal informality.

Some of their more old-fashioned neighbors, while protesting that it sounded "cute," were rather disturbed. One of them protested: "How can a child possibly grow up to respect her parents if she calls you Pen and Brad!"

"We don't want Janet to respect us," said her father.

"We want her to *like* us," said Penelope.

"Of course," said the neighbor, "all children love their parents!"

Peter Iverson was envious of Brad's being thus addressed by his little girl. His own children called him Dad—but that wasn't the same thing. He had a little girl, just beginning to talk; and he wanted her to call him Peter.

He would sit with little Eve (otherwise known as Peachums) on his knee, coaxing her. "Da-die!" she would say.—"No, Peachums, no! That isn't my name. My name's Peter. Say Peter for me—that's a nice little Peachums! Peter!"

"Pe-tah!" said Peachums, shyly.

Peter Iverson was a rising young business man, an official of a lumber company; eminently cautious in politics, he regarded the free-silver campaign, just beginning in the farming districts, as a peril to the Republic; but here, in his own home, he was engaged in fostering a revolution. Bradford laughingly told him so more than once.

Winter, in Scott Park again, brought Bradford and Penelope once more into close contact with the life of the college—with which their own lives became more and more intimately identified. Bradford contributed generously to the building of a new Science Hall; Penelope gave parties for the students at her home, and became a person whose presence was necessary to the complete success of any of their

social affairs. And Bradford March was presently asked to do the college the honor of becoming one of its regents.

He accepted with gratification. At about the same time he was invited to become a deacon in the first Presbyterian church of Scott Park. A few years ago Bradford and Penelope had resumed their church-going habits, at least when in town; habits never formally broken off, but in the earlier years of their married life almost entirely neglected. Bradford accepted this position also—not without a smile.

It still seemed to him rather strange that people should regard him as an important personage. Whereas he realized, these late years more than ever since his childhood, that he was only the great Andrew March's son. He had never become—himself.

He was glad that Janet would never grow up in such awe of him.

She must be allowed to become—all that she might become; her very self!

8.

The grain business had been hard-hit by a country-wide depression, amounting almost to a panic. The bottom had suddenly fallen out of the wheat-market. Some of the local branches, recklessly managed, had loaded up far too heavily on orders. The company had to be reorganized to survive the blow.

Andrew March, queerly enough, seemed to take a certain grim satisfaction in this ill-fortune.

Andrew was getting old. His tall, stooping, rather shabby figure, with its lean face, sharp eyes, and unkempt little beard, was seen less often on the streets, to be pointed out by passers-by. But still, at irregular intervals, he walked—disdaining that new invention, the automobile—from his big yellow house on Fillmore street to the March building.

And then, within a few months after the company's reorganization, he suffered a paralytic stroke—and he walked no more to business, nor stirred out of his house. He must really have been hurt by this business trouble, after all.

He recovered from his first helplessness, but was still feeble,

in all but his stubborn will. He would not go to live with any of his children, nor hear of their coming to live with him. He was impatient even of the nurse, whose presence reminded him of an infirmity which he wished to deny; as soon as he was able to walk from his bed to his favorite chair in the front room, he dismissed her. An old housekeeper, and an old hired man to build fires and cut wood, were all the help he required. Of course, if his children wanted to come and see him once in a while—

They took turns, his children and children-in-law, coming one at a time, as he preferred, to sit in the big front room for an afternoon or an evening, hearing him explain in his weak whisper that he was still rather poorly, but expected to be down to the office again in a day or two. . . . They knew that his heart had been badly weakened by his stroke, and that it might give over its task at any moment.

Penelope had stopped her visits toward the last, for she was, now that they had almost ceased to hope for more children, again pregnant.

"I hope 'twill be a grandson for me," Andrew had whispered. It was one of his grudges against his children that they had given him no grandsons. Dolly had had five girls. They did not interest him. He had forgotten Junior; and Bradford did not wish to remind him.

It was Bradford's turn to spend Sunday afternoon with his father. Penelope's expected confinement was less than a week off. She was at Winga Bay, enjoying the beautiful early fall weather.

Bradford had brought with him a book on what was becoming his hobby—sociology. It was a new book, just added to the required reading list of Professor Horton's course in Scott college. As old Andrew sat silent in his big chair, with his feet stretched out toward the fireplace, in which in spite of the warm weather there was a little fire burning, Bradford walked quietly over to the table where he had laid the book, brought it back, and read. The passage which had caught his interest was this:

"The basis of most of the large fortunes in America was laid in the decade commencing with the Civil War. In that period the vast natural resources of the continent were be-

ginning to be exploited on a large scale by modern machinery; and those individuals who happened during that period to be connected with the exploitation of these resources had a peculiar and golden opportunity—created, not by their own efforts, but by the stupendous and inevitable economic development of the country. If they took due advantage of their opportunities, they could hardly fail to become in time immensely rich.”

Bradford looked up from the page, across at his father.

He wished that this book had been in existence, and on the required reading list of Scott college, when he was a boy. Now he could merely understand this doctrine with his mind; it was too late for it to mean anything to his emotions. He wished some one had told him this a long time ago. It might have dispelled his respect for the March fortune, and his awe of the great Andrew March. He would perhaps have been able to see Andrew March as a human being instead of as a god. Perhaps he would have loved him—the father who had been obscured by the thunders and lightnings of heroic myth. It was curious—he was a grown man, with a child of his own, and yet he felt like an unworthy little boy, still, when he was with the great Andrew March!

His father's whisper startled him. “What is't you're reading, Bradford?”

Bradford put down the book guiltily. But he answered, with an effort. “It's a book they read in college, father—about how fortunes were made in America.”

Andrew March pressed his lips together, and the wrinkles of his face took on the semblance of a wise and scornful grimace. “More of your queer notions, I suppose,” he whispered.

“Other people have queer notions now, too—queerer than mine!” said his son. He was thinking of a boy, Roger Leland, who had been at Winga Bay for a few weeks that summer—a discontented youth, with wild theories about everything, whom Bradford had secretly identified with himself; he had even tried to persuade the boy to take a position which had been his own youthful dream, that of teaching English literature at Scott college—only to have the boy scorn the idea utterly!

There was a long silence, and Bradford supposed his father was thinking of something else when presently his whisper came again: "What does the book say—that we stole our money?"

"Not at all." Bradford hesitated a moment. He was the only one, nowadays, of all the children, who ever tried to bridge with talk the gulf between them. The others said, "Father's old," and talked about the weather, or how much better he was looking to-day. But Bradford still felt impelled by the wish to establish an understanding between himself and the old man—as though he might yet succeed in explaining himself to Andrew March and securing from him at last the right to be himself!

He summed up in a few words the book's argument about American fortunes. Again there came on old Andrew's face that wrinkled grimace of scorn, and then his whisper came, more vigorously than usual:

"That sounds all very well. I wouldn't take it on myself to contradict what they teach in college. But remember this, it was I got rich, and not Macdougall, that owned the livery-stable before me."

"Yes," Bradford agreed. "Macdougall was a drunkard—and you weren't. After all, everybody couldn't make a fortune. I suppose the man that wrote this book would call it the survival of the fittest." He was trying to reconcile his father's explanation with the one in the book.

"Call it what you like," whispered the old man. "But there's another side to it all."

And he sat silent, checking the impulse to speak, realizing that nobody, and least of all his own children, wanted to hear again the story of his life—how he had tithed every Sunday; how he had started a bank account; how he had never gambled or drunk or smoked, or wasted his time running around with girls. . . . Unwittingly he whispered aloud: "And not that I was close, either; I bought my cousins, every one of them, a Christmas present—some little thing, but useful."

He relapsed into silence again. No—they had heard the story of the thousand dollars he had saved up. After that thousand dollars, to be sure, it had all been easy enough. Anybody with any sense would have turned the livery-stable

into a feed-store, and then into a grain storage warehouse. Any one could have made money out of wheat, once he had started. The big grain elevator—that was nothing. And the combine—that was a mistake, and what had just happened only proved it. Those Chicago and New York bankers, what did they know about wheat? They were gamblers, and it served them right to lose. Since the business had gone under their control, he had made more money, it was true; but he had given most of it away. A tithe of honest gains was enough to give to God, maybe; but these gains were made in partnership with gamblers. What the book said was right enough, there. He had never boasted of his luck. But that first thousand dollars, he had a right to be proud of that.

Where would he be now—he asked himself, looking around at the big dingy room, a room seen by him as comfortable and homelike—where would he be now if he hadn't had that thousand dollars when Mac was in trouble and needed the money? Yes, where would he be now if he had drunk and gambled and wasted his time with girls? Buried at the county poor-farm, likely enough, along with Mac. . . .

No, nobody wanted to hear any of that. Unless—this might interest the boy Bradford—

"Many's the winter morning," he began, whispering laboriously, "when I've got up in a cold room over the stable, with the thermometer at fifteen below zero—"

He paused for breath.

"Yes, father," said Bradford gently, "—and you broke the ice in the water-pail with a hatchet, to wash in. Mother used to tell us when we were little."

Old Andrew sank back into his chair again, and his son, seeing him lost in some reverie, did not speak. The old man's compressed lips softened into a quaint smile.

He was thinking of Alma, his wife, dead now these many years. He had forgotten that Bradford was with him. He seemed to himself to be alone in the room. He thought of Alma, and smiled.

He was smiling at a picture that had come into his mind, a picture of himself and Alma that first evening as they walked home from church. He had been very much afraid of her; but he hadn't let her know it. And she was already

in love with him, though she hadn't known it. Andrew saw in memory that scared, bold lover, and that proud, bewildered girl. He lived again that love-scene. He was never a reader of novels, and this had been his one love-passage, so that he had nothing to compare it with; he was unable to realize to what heights of romantic daring he had, in his inexperience, risen in his courtship. What he had said and done was merely what he had to say and do. And the aspect of this long-vanished romance upon which his memory now lingered fondly was by no means his own audacity, but a picture of her—who even then, in her bewilderment, while she strove to flout him, was giving signs (he could read them clearly enough now) of yielding to him. In her flushed cheeks, in the startled poses of her delicate body, like a young deer on the verge of flight (he had seen them in the woods that time he was out campaigning against the Indians), and in her fiery glances, half angry and half alarmed, he already saw surrender—and it was this, the first-fruits of young love, hardly noticed at the time, and in his young earnestness not enjoyed, that he was tasting now.

—From somewhere within the house came the clamor of a telephone. And then Andrew's old housekeeper opened the door with a frightened air.

"It's for you, Mr. Bradford," she said.

Bradford hurried to the telephone.

9.

"That you, Brad?" came the voice. "This is Bill Iverson. I've good news for you. You are the father of a fine husky boy!"

"What!"

"Yes! A surprise to us, too! It all happened inside of an hour. Dr. Burch was here. And Pen said not to 'phone you till it was over."

"Pen—is she . . . ?"

"Yes, Pen's all right. Perfectly. And John's on his way over to relieve you."

"You said a boy, I think."

"I did. A boy."

Bradford walked dazedly back into the front room. His father was looking up inquiringly.

"You have a grandson, father," he said.

The old man required several seconds to take this in. Then he rose up from his chair, and made a step toward his son. Bradford came to him, and took him gently by the arm. He reached up and caught Bradford's coat-lapel with thin fingers. "You'll maybe name him Andrew?" he whispered eagerly.

"Why—I don't know, father—I'll have to ask Pen," said Bradford in embarrassment, helping his father back into his chair.

There was a ring at the front door.

"I expect that's John," said Bradford, and hurried to the door. He gave one look back at his father, who had slumped into his chair in a dejected sprawl, with his head on his chest. Bradford was smitten with remorse. "Why shouldn't I have told him yes?" he asked himself. At the same time, he knew that he didn't want to name his son Andrew.

It was John at the door. They shook hands in the hallway. "You run along now," said John. "I'll stay with father."

"I'll say good-by to him," said Bradford.

When they came into the front room, the old housekeeper was there, bending over Andrew's chair. She looked up at them solemnly. "He's gone!" she said.

Book Two: Roger

CHAPTER ONE: Farewell to Plainsburg

I.

PLAINSBURG. There was a square fenced in with hitching racks for the farmers' teams, and little brick stores with façades ornamented with painted tin. There were wooden houses with tiny well-kept lawns in front and rank weeds and chicken-wallows in the back. There were roads, deep with summer dust; and beyond, in every direction, for endless, treeless miles, a vast expanse of wheat and corn, under a blazing sky. And for escape, a cindery little train, twice a day, that led slowly and haltingly to the main line, forty miles away.

Roger would always remember Plainsburg as hot. Spring had come with its violets, autumn with its dead swirling leaves, winter with its snowdrifts; but he would remember Plainsburg as sweltering eternally in this breathless summer heat. Those last months, while he waited there—first for the news of whether he had won the Herald college prize scholarship, and then for the moment of his departure, always in fear that something would happen to frustrate his hopes—stamped their quality, and their temperature, upon his memories of Plainsburg. It was as if he were one of the damned, planning to leave the dustiest suburb of hell.

Roger's uncle sold farm-implements in one of the little stores on the square; and Roger worked there. Roger's uncle and two aunts lived in one of the little lawn-fronted houses; and Roger lived there with them. All that Roger knew, except in dreams, tied him to Plainsburg. But all his dreams were of escape—from his uncle, his aunts, the implement-store, from Plainsburg, forever.

2.

Roger never thought of Plainsburg as Middle-Western. He thought of it as a meeting-point and a battle-ground of the

East and the South. The town had been settled originally by Southern farmers, who were later raided, robbed and massacred by bands of abolitionist desperadoes led by the precursors of John Brown of Osawatomie. Or so he had been told by old Jim Lord, a descendant of the original settlers. But Jim was the town's most notorious loafer and drunkard; and perhaps he lied. Yet there was a Southern element in the town, and an element that boasted a New England origin. Whether or not their grandfathers had ever fought each other with guns, there had been some kind of struggle between these two hostile forces. And New England had conquered.

But the other element was still there—defeated, but not yet exterminated. The two breeds had inevitably intermingled. Roger was the child of such a union.

At least, it was with this Southern element that he identified his father, absent and unknown since his childhood; and his dead mother had been of New England stock. Oddly enough, he could hardly remember what she looked like; but her picture hung in the front room, a crayon "enlargement" in colors; and her face, in that picture, bore the same cast of features, thin and austere, as her living sisters.

Roger had looked long at that picture, and into the mirror in his bedroom, for some common likeness. His mother had apparently been frail of figure; he himself was big of bulk, and sturdy. He had inherited that bigness from his father; and he had his father's shock of black hair, and his father's eyes, black and blazing. *Her* hair had been brown, her eyes gray. But his lips, perhaps, were his mother's—firm lips, like those in the portrait. They were, those lips in the picture, set in a faint, sad smile. He was reminded uncomfortably of Aunt Lucy's smile, mournful and resigned. But his mother could not have been like Aunt Lucy; and still less could she have been like Aunt Judith, in whom those firm lips had become intolerably straight and severe. No, Constance Hosmer could not have been like her sisters, or she would never have married Henry Leland.

It was in thinking of his father that young Roger arrived at an understanding of the virtues which must once have been implicit in this Southern temperament; a love of beauty, of romance, of ease. As things stood in Plainsburg, these

banished virtues had revenged themselves upon the town by leaving behind their corresponding vices—an unwillingness to work, plan, and save; or, as Aunt Judith preferred to put it, a love of dirt, idleness and debauchery. It was this streak of laziness, wildness, disorderliness, persisting in the town, that had aroused the forces of New England piety to so intense a pitch. Roger understood from early years, in his Uncle's house and his Aunts' care, that he was by one half his lineage prone to all these deadly vices, and only by stern discipline to be saved from the devil.

It was in loyalty to a bright secret image of his father that he felt there was something to be said for the devil and his works. He had been taught to regard with shrinking and horror Plainsburg's disreputable element—an element that had sunk so low as to constitute a fringe of slum in this little country town. He brooded, as a boy, over the fragmentary scandals he heard, which invariably concerned this slum-population living down near the depot; these scandals were chiefly of illicit whiskey-selling, drunkenness, brawling, wife-beating, poverty, and wretchedness, with an occasional story of bastardy, adultery, and murder. Loathing these dreadful things, he yet felt an irresistible curiosity to know what these people were like. In obedience to this impulse, he stealthily made, in his fifteenth year, the acquaintance of good-for-nothing, picturesque, tobacco-stained old Jim Lord. He may have wanted to ask about his father. But he did not ask—perhaps for fear of what he would learn. He did find Jim Lord the only person in Plainsburg he could *talk* to. Beneath the tobacco-stains, it seemed, Jim Lord had a mind and an imagination. More strangely still, he had read books. He quoted Bobbie Burns, and Sir Walter Scott; and so far as Roger knew, was the only adult in Plainsburg who had by heart a single line of poetry.

Not very long after Roger had surreptitiously made his acquaintance, Jim Lord died—an edifying death: he was burned to death in his wretched shack, in a fire doubtless started by his own drunken carelessness. Roger heard of it the next morning on his way to school, and with two other boys he went to the scene. The town constable was there, waiting for the coroner, and there was a little crowd of the

dead man's friends. The body was still lying among the charred ruins; and before the curious youngsters could be driven away by the constable, Roger had a sickened glimpse of the body—charred and horrible; and yet, when his Uncle, that evening, moralized upon the bad end to which Jim Lord had appropriately come, Roger's secret emotions were only of pity and sorrow—pity for himself, because his friend was dead, and sorrow that there was no one left in Plainsburg who knew by heart a line of poetry. . . .

Soon these others, Jim Lord's miserable friends, would be dead, too; and people like Uncle Abner would have Plainsburg all to themselves, to run just as they liked. Then everybody would work and plan and save; everybody would become prosperous; the roads would be improved, the houses painted new, the backyards cleaned up—everything would be as neat as a row of pins; there would be honest sweating all week long, and good clothes for everybody to wear on Sunday; Uncle Abner's millennium would have arrived. It was then that Roger knew he must leave Plainsburg soon—before it conquered him.

Nevertheless, he couldn't think of any way to get away; and he had finished high school and gone to work in his Uncle's store when his chance came. . . .

Uncle Abner was a good man, and a kindly one, in his way; and so was his wife, Aunt Lucy. Their only fault was a lack of imagination. They had meant well in giving Roger, orphan as he was, a home—and an opportunity, as though he had been their own son, to make a respectable living selling farm implements in the little brick building on the square. If Aunt Judith—Aunt Lucy's unmarried sister—was not to be described as kindly, nevertheless she too in her acid way meant well by the boy. How could they know that in everything they did, even in offering him a place in the store, he managed to find an implicit insult to the memory of his father!

Of his father as an actual person, Roger knew little. He had gone away before Roger's mother died, while Roger was still a child, and was never heard of again. Roger didn't even know if he were alive or dead. Uncle Abner never mentioned him, which was his way of being kind. Aunt Lucy

preferred to speak, with a sigh, of the patience and forbearance of her dead sister. Only Aunt Judith's bitter tongue revealed to Roger anything of his father's history—and little enough, at that.

Henry Leland had been, it would seem, "shiftless" and "no-account." The match had been disapproved by Constance Hosmer's family; and Henry Leland had justified their disapproval by failing to "provide" for her. That was all his son ever learned about him; or at least, all that he quite believed. He sensed, in the marriage of his father and his mother, some tragic struggle of alien temperaments—and it was not necessary to credit Aunt Judith's darker hints at his father's wickedness to believe that his mother had been unhappy. Roger suspected that Aunt Judith herself had been in love with his father—her ever-living hatred of him seemed to hurt her so!

He remembered his father as a big man with a big mustache—a strong, handsome, gay, delightful man to have for a father, always whistling and singing about the house, and whittling toys for his little boy, and telling him stories. He had given Roger a book with pictures, a story about pirates, for years the boy's only book. It was from this book that he learned his letters—oddly enough, with Aunt Judith's assistance. But one day when he was out playing, Aunt Judith burned up that tattered book as "trash." Roger never forgave her.

He insisted on being allowed to go to school a year before the customary age; no one ever guessed why, but it was in order that he might have more books, to replace the one which his father had given him. It was somehow in defiant secret obedience to his father's wishes, as he conceived them, that he read in these books so avidly, learned his lessons so faithfully, and advanced through school with such precocious brilliance. And it was in obedience to these same imagined wishes that he secretly determined to leave Plainsburg.

Yet it never occurred to him simply to leave home; he had to find some way to get his Uncle Abner's permission.

Then his opportunity came. A scholarship was being offered by a small denominational college in another state. There was to be a competitive examination at high school. Roger

obtained the consent of the principal to take the examination with the others. He knew he could win the scholarship.

He did win it; and Uncle Abner and the Aunts proved their kindness, and their confidence in him, by agreeing to his going. Herald college was a Methodist institution, and they must have thought it a safe place, situated though it was in the vicinity of the two large, and hence wicked, cities of White Falls and St. Pierre. Even Aunt Judith did not oppose the arrangement, though she freely declared that Roger would find plenty of opportunity to go to the devil even at a Methodist college. Aunt Judith could not be said to be devoid of imagination; but she exercised it exclusively in seeing opportunities for evil—and always with the history of Roger's father in the background of her thoughts.

3.

Roger was in a sullen mood that last day in Plainsburg. It was late in August, and the two weeks that still intervened before college opened he was to spend at the home of Uncle Abner's brother in Topeka, where he was to outfit himself with clothes. Uncle Abner was being really generous; the scholarship Roger had won provided only for his tuition, and he had expected to earn somehow his board and lodging. But it appeared that Uncle Abner was proud of him, and willing to give him an allowance to live on. Roger could hardly have asked for anything better. But he thought only of getting away.

There was a final farewell to be undergone. The family was to accompany him down to the station to see him off. His Aunts dressed up for the occasion, as if it had been church, in their black satins. These preparations were completed an hour before train-time; and the interval was spent in the front room. It was a room sparingly used and pretentiously neat, with its stiff lace curtains and thick flowered carpet bought from a mail-order house in St. Louis. There was shiny furniture of golden oak and blue plush; and a piano—upon which no one had ever played. And there were the gilt-framed portraits of their immediate ancestors, excepting Roger's father.

Here sat the four of them, conscious of the solemnity of the occasion. Uncle Abner at the last minute had also dressed up—not in the black swallow-tailed coat in which he passed the collection bag in the First Methodist church on Sundays, but in the suit which he wore on his rare business visits to Topeka. Roger was in his best blue serge suit, in which, however, he managed to look as slouchy as usual. They sat in constrained attitudes. Roger, an awkward, overgrown young giant, perched himself uneasily on the edge of a plush-upholstered chair and stared over the heads of his anxious relatives, past the large family Bible that stood on the golden-oak center-table—until he became aware that he was staring at his mother's sadly-smiling face in the gilt frame. He looked away—he looked at the wall-paper with its pattern of climbing roses; and a stanza of Omar Khayyám came into his head:

*Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo!
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw!"*

It was, to the others, a truly solemn moment. Roger was in a sense their child, since they had none of their own. He was going out into the world;—they didn't know that he was never coming back. He was to undergo a test which would show whether their pious discipline had been of avail, or whether he was merely a chip of the old block.

Something ought to be said—something appropriate. Uncle Abner, who was often embarrassed by the sullen mockery that lurked behind the apparently respectful manner with which Roger listened to his family sermonizings, was manifestly ill-at-ease. He swallowed nervously, his Adam's apple sliding up and down his long scrawny throat above his tight collar, and his protruding ears growing red in the effort. He did at last manage to speak, briefly and sententiously. "Well, my boy, the best advice I can give you is the advice my father gave me. . . ."

Familiar phrases all, ending with a dictum which Roger had heard him utter many times before—a saying which Roger was accustomed to mark, and barely refrained from marking now, as always, with a pious ceilingward glance:—"Save your

money, and keep out of low company." And so saying, he handed Roger the first installment of his allowance.

Aunt Lucy addressed him more at length, stopping to cry in the midst of her remarks. With a sense of the ridiculousness of the scene, Roger awkwardly attempted to comfort her. She hung on his broad shoulder for a minute, and whispered, "If ever you get into any trouble, Roger, write to me about it. . . ."

Aunt Judith, spiteful to the last, remarked—quoting the latest itinerant evangelist—"A young man alone in a big city is the devil's choicest opportunity."

Roger knew he ought to say something in reply to these pious encouragements and warnings. He might say that he would try to live up to the high standards they had taught him. But that would be a lie—and Roger hated lies. He might at least express some gratitude, then. But he didn't feel grateful. He only wanted to get away.

Uncle Abner pulled out his watch, and the first part of the farewell was over. They all drove down to the station in the family surrey, and stood about for fifteen minutes waiting for the train. Roger's collar was wilted, he felt sticky and hot, and he wished they would leave him alone. He picked up his valise impatiently, and set it down again with a sigh.

The train came at last, and then Roger's Aunts kissed him. He hardly knew which he hated most at that moment, Aunt Judith's little leathery kiss, or Aunt Lucy's moist and sad embrace. He shook hands with Uncle Abner. Well! it was over! . . . He climbed aboard, settled himself in a seat by the open window—and there they were, gathered underneath.

"Write to us, Roger," said Aunt Lucy.

"Oh, I shall," he said.

Awkward silence fell upon them. Uncle Abner took out his handkerchief and mopped his neck. Aunt Lucy commenced to cry again. . . . Wouldn't the train ever start?

In this town in which he had lived all the sixteen years of his life, he had had no friend except old Jim Lord; a poor, pitiful friendship, taken by stealth, and all too soon ended. He had never been in love; he had walked only once in his life in the moonlight with a girl; there were no kisses to re-

member Plainsburg for. Why should he not forget Plainsburg utterly?

The train started, slowly. "Good-by!" "Good-by!"—over and over. They were waving damp handkerchiefs. He waved back mechanically until the train rounded the curve and shut them from view. Then he took his last look at Plainsburg—his last look, he assured himself, for ever.

4.

A large, ungainly black-haired boy lingered after the others had gone, at the end of the recitation in second-year Greek. Professor Prendergast, a little old man, gentle by nature and only rendered rather gruff by years of contact with undergraduate stupidity, looked up and beamed. This was his favorite pupil in the sophomore class—the only one, in fact, who seemed to regard Greek as a language and not as a frightful ordeal.

"Well, Leland," he said, "what is it?"

"Professor Prendergast—I'd like to know if it's possible for me to go into Homer this year instead of next."

"A somewhat unusual request," said the teacher, taking off his steel-rimmed glasses.

"I mean," said the boy hurriedly, "I'd be willing to take an examination, and all that. I think I could do it without any trouble."

"Perhaps you could," said the teacher. "And perhaps it might be arranged, if it seemed advisable. Sit down. Now tell me—why?"

"Because," said the boy, after seating himself awkwardly beside the desk, "Homer seems more interesting."

"True, in a way," the teacher conceded. "But that's not a very good reason. Anabasis is good second-year preparation. If there is some particular reason for hurrying on—" He looked thoughtfully at the young man. "You are studying for the ministry?"

"No," said the boy.

"Oh! I rather took it for granted that you were."

The boy looked puzzled. "Would that make any difference?" he asked.

"Why—yes, perhaps," said the teacher.

"Excuse me," said the boy sullenly. "I don't quite see the connection between Homer and going into the ministry! Would you mind explaining it to me?"

The teacher smiled. "I only meant," he said, "that if you were preparing for the ministry, and anxious, for some special reason, such as—well, financial considerations—to shorten your course of studies here . . . granted always, you understand, that you were able to go into such advanced studies without this preliminary work . . . why, the authorities of the college might be willing to facilitate the matter."

"But I still don't see," said the boy stubbornly, "what Homer has to do with preaching."

"Greek," said the teacher, a little severely, "happens to be the language in which the Gospels are written."

"Oh, yes," said the boy. "I suppose they are. But I don't wish to read the Gospels in Greek." He paused, and added, looking down at one shoe—"Or in any other language!"

He sat there stiffly, as if waiting a reply to this declaration.

The teacher did not at once reply. He looked, instead at a pile of "exercises" on his desk; he lifted the one on top, and noted a banal error in the first line; he put it back, and sat tapping the eraser of his pencil upon his desk. He was reflecting that it was, to say the least, ungracious of this youth, who was here on a free scholarship, to utter sentiments deliberately disrespectful to the church which was giving him an education. He was reflecting that it was his duty to point this out, if only as a breach of manners. But he remembered that the only really profound Greek scholar he had ever been acquainted with had no manners—none at all. He said to himself that he liked this young Leland; he was a queer boy, shy, sensitive, intense, and—as it now appeared—quarrelsome. He had suddenly, for no reason, begun to try to pick a quarrel with Herald college. He had a chip on his shoulder; he had taken it into his head to be angry because the Gospels were written in the language of Homer! Professor Prendergast smiled, and looked at the boy, who sat in a belligerent silence awaiting his reply. A free-thinker, doubtless; they sometimes

were, at that age. But—he did have an ear for Greek. Well . . .

"Leland," said the teacher, "I think I can have it arranged for you to go into my class in Homer at the beginning of the next semester. No examination will be necessary."

"But—" said the boy, surprised. "But you said—!"

So the young cub was not content with having his way; he must know the reason why!

"Never mind," said the teacher firmly. "The matter will be attended to. And now,"—he smiled ironically—"is there anything *else* you would like?"

The boy arose in embarrassment. "Thank you, Professor," he said.

"Oh, not at all," said the teacher. "But—it might help me if you would answer another question. Are you going to teach?"

"No," said the boy.

"Well—what are your plans?"

"For a career, you mean? I guess I haven't any plans."

"Tell me, then—why are you so interested in Greek?"

"Why," said the boy, "it's just that there are things in Greek that I want to read. The Greeks had a way of looking at things . . ."

"Mm . . ." the teacher mused. "The Greek view of life? Well—that can be overdone; I wouldn't think too much about that side of it if I were you. Plato—yes, perhaps; though even there. . . . This isn't Ancient Greece, you know! The documents you are so uninterested in—the Gospels, I mean—have changed matters a good deal. This is a Christian civilization we are living in."

The boy was listening in a manner which was apparently respectful, and yet which made the teacher vaguely uncomfortable. Roger was, in fact, listening to him as he had used to listen to his Uncle Abner in Plainsburg.

"Yes, Professor," he said quietly.

A moment before, Professor Prendergast had understood this youth and sympathized with him. Now he felt pushed away, across a gulf of years; he felt old. In this respectful boy standing quietly before him there was something mocking and cold and hostile.

Professor Prendergast realized that he had been, as usual, too easy. He should have given this cub a good dressing-down. That was what Perks, his younger colleague, would have done.

He rose. "You've wasted enough of my time," he growled. "I shall be late for my lunch."

"I'm sorry, Professor," said Roger, and went away. Out on the campus he began to laugh aloud, and some students turned and stared at him.

5.

Roger was beginning to be dissatisfied with the fruits of his prize scholarship.

Herald college:—the quaint old buildings, half dignified and half pathetic;—the classrooms, with their desk-chairs scarred and whittled over with the initials of years past;—the professors, old and shabby and sweet and tolerant and futile, or young, trim, brisk, arrogant and empty;—the noisy sociability, the facile and vapid friendliness of campus and corridor;—the boys and girls, serious and frivolous, grinds and good sports, dowdy ones and snappy ones, clustering together with an instinctive sense of natural affinity, in groups that gave to every one, it seemed, except him, the solace of companionship;—and, strangest of all to Roger, that phenomenon to be observed at meetings and games, the College Spirit, melting and fusing all these various groups into one indistinguishable mass!—these aspects of life were new to him, and interesting in their way, and not wholly to be scorned. But all this was not what he had come for.

Ever since he had first learned to read, in that book with pictures which his father had given him, he had regarded books as containing the secrets of a larger life. It was in the light of these hopes that he had resolved to leave Plainsburg. What he read, in his fevered post-adolescence, and what dreams his reading put into his head, made him hate and despise the life he knew.

The people of Plainsburg, in their addiction to what they called "honest work," seemed to him the victims of a monstrous self-imposed slavery. Of course, it was necessary to

have food, houses, clothing; and these, surely, it should have been easy enough to get—as easy as breathing. But no, by what seemed to him absurd and fantastic arrangements, it was made as difficult as possible. The mere getting of a living had become a hysterical preoccupation, displacing every other interest.

Roger had seen, in Jim Lord's shack, a jar of worms, a writhing mass in which each worm struggled to push itself to the top, only to be drawn down after a moment into the struggle underneath—an effort endlessly renewed, a silent, intense, ceaseless activity. But, at least, it wasn't the worms' fault that they found themselves in such a mess. They didn't call that activity of theirs "honest work" and think that life held nothing better for them.

Life!—they never, in Plainsburg, considered what it might be. What it was had been settled for them long ago. They accepted unquestioningly this meaningless struggle as being life itself. They devoted themselves to making a living; and, meanwhile, they grew up, married, had children, became old; and so, dying without having lived, they bequeathed to their children—what? The same meaningless struggle. That was not Roger's notion of life.

What did he want? A life as unlike as possible to this in Plainsburg; a life in which people were not afraid to waste their time in thinking of, and talking about, and making, useless and beautiful things.

Books do hint at such a life; and it is not strange if some boy should occasionally expect to find it outside their covers!

It was to learn how to achieve in reality this ideal that he had come to Herald college. Having an as yet unwearied intellectual curiosity, and a great deal of sheer animal energy otherwise unused, he attacked his studies with immense zest; and having, too, a great deal of egotism, he was for a time satisfied with the praise he received from his teachers. But during the second year he began to be aware that something was wrong. And by the time he had completed his third year, he thought he knew what the trouble was. He had come here to find freedom and happiness; and he wasn't any nearer to freedom and happiness than he had been in Plainsburg.

Not at once, but gradually, he made the discovery. The

teaching in Herald college was an attempt to justify the kind of life he had fled from in Plainsburg. It was intended, in fact, to be a preparation for such a life; it did have the merit of being a mistaken and inefficient preparation—that was the best that could be said for it.

Political economy—translated into homely terms, it meant that the farmers around Plainsburg couldn't get new farm machinery without mortgaging their farms to Banker Prout; and hence that Banker Prout was the benefactor of struggling humanity.

Ethics—meant that the Plainsburg citizen should pay his debts and support his family; even though, to pay those debts and support that family, the Plainsburg citizen must deny himself every human pleasure, every wayward thought, every idle dream, every strange hope. . . .

He hadn't come to college to learn such things as that.

It seemed that he had escaped in vain from Plainsburg; here in Herald college the Plainsburg theory of life was still supreme.

He was sick of Plainsburg. He wanted a new world—nothing less. People between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five sometimes do. He was certain that he did not wish to devote himself to the meaningless tasks which were all the world as he found it had to offer. . . . What *did* he want, in sensible terms? Nothing, perhaps, that could be expressed in sensible terms. But why expect all young men to be sensible? Roger was not.

6.

Herald college was situated in a suburb between White Falls and St. Pierre. Roger lived in White Falls, in a tiny boarding-house room. During those college years, he was quiet and studious, and made no friends. One day in his freshman year, four of his classmates called on him—a little formally, for doubtless they were as baffled by him as he by them—and, looking approvingly at his big bulk, suggested that he try out for football. He said that football didn't interest him. The spokesman of the group then made some reference to "College Spirit." Roger replied that he didn't

have any. They all looked shocked, and Roger realized that he had blasphemed their deity. . . .

Thereafter he was hardly aware of the existence of his fellow-students. Perhaps he was ostracized. If so, he was not aware of the fact.

7.

Being scornful of college activities, and anxious to achieve independence from his uncle, he had begun immediately to look for work after class-hours. He found it, that first winter, in the book-department of Howard's, one of White Falls' largest department stores. The work there gave him some use for his abundant energies, and, as time went on, a little authority.

The head of the department, Mr. Billings, an elderly man, gray, stooping, and half-blind, who had formerly been in charge of stationery, knew nothing whatever about books. Once when asked by McGill, professor of fine arts at Herald, if he had anything on Japanese prints, he said, "Why, I'm afraid not exactly that, but here is something that might interest you!"—and led the way benevolently to "The Prince of India." It was this story, overheard in the corridor at Herald, that had led Roger to go there for work.

The job provided a good excuse for not going back to Plainsburg for the Christmas holidays—an excuse which he knew Uncle Abner's economical soul would appreciate. He had the opportunity to work in the book-department during his summer vacation, and again he did not go back to Plainsburg. . . . He never went back.

There were books in the store of which he had not heard at college. The course in English at Herald stopped with the death of Robert Louis Stevenson. Roger discovered that there had been English writers since that time. Also, he found that there were interesting writers born out of England in the last century. There was a whole world of ideas to explore.

Roger secured from Mr. Billings the privilege of taking home for examination any book he pleased. He thus had a large quasi-private library at his command. It sometimes seemed to him rather odd that he should be paid, however

meagerly, for living the kind of life he most preferred, with books for his friends.

Already, working after class-hours and on Saturdays, he was practically running the department—if not quite as he pleased, yet without any interference from old Billings, who was in awe of him because he really knew something about books. When any one asked for an unusual book—and almost any was likely to seem unusual to old Billings—he would peer about for Roger over his spectacles; and usually failing to see him, would call out, “Mr. Leland?”—raising his voice so as to be heard above the noise of the music-department adjoining. Roger would rise up, brushing off his knees, from a rearrangement of the lower shelves, or climb down the ladder from an inspection of the upper ones—a large, awkward youth with a face at once eager and discontented. “Mr. Leland will find you what you want,” old Billings would say soothingly to the customer.

Sometimes—rarely enough, but still it did occasionally happen—the customer was a person with whom Roger could in some degree exchange thoughts. These thoughts were always ostensibly about books; but really they were about life. The persons with whom he thus, under the guise of recommending a new book, exchanged views of life, were invariably mature in age, and almost invariably they were men. Young people he feared; girls he avoided; women in general he scarcely expected to be interested in so abstract a theme as Life. The people with whom he talked did not, of course, share his own views; that would have been asking too much. It was sufficient that they should have thought about the problem, and be willing to express themselves. One of them was an elderly Catholic priest; another a retired corporation lawyer; another a well-to-do eccentric with a collection of antique cameos, which he invited Roger to come and see. Roger encouraged them to state what he privately termed the “authoritarian,” the “legalistic,” and the “esthetic” views of life, while inwardly pondering his own sufficiently different view.

These people were, no doubt, agreeably surprised at the intellectual interests of this youth; and if he had been disposed to cultivate their acquaintance further, he might have done so. But he was interested in them as spokesmen for

their various philosophies, and he had an air which warned off any merely friendly advances. Nevertheless, he was pleased with these discussions, and they constituted an additional reason why he continued to work in the book-department.

8.

The most interesting of these customers proved to be, surprisingly enough, a woman. Her name was Mrs. March. After a casual visit to the book-department at Howard's, she formed the habit of buying her books there, and of stopping to talk with Roger. From the extent of her purchases Roger realized that she must be well-to-do; from her conversation he knew that she was intelligent.

She was a tall, slender woman, of indefinite age in appearance, but actually in her early thirties. Her soft brown hair, drawn straight back from a wide forehead, perpetually escaped in wisps from under her small hat, so that when she entered the room, quickly, as she always did, she had the look of one who has been running. Her face was slim, like her body; her eyes, set wide apart, were a deep gray; and her voice, despite her quick movements, was low-pitched, soft and slow. She wore, carelessly, some kind of tailored suit, and low-heeled shoes. Roger was not given to marking appearances, but he marked hers the first time he saw her. This plain woman, plainly dressed, without exerting any of the ostensible tricks of womanly fascination, had the power of charm in an unusual degree. Perhaps it was first of all the careless vitality of her appearance—for he liked her even before she spoke, or looked at him; afterward, when they talked, it was her slow, pausing voice, and the deep intentness of her gray eyes—telling him that she was thinking while she spoke and meaning all she said.

She had, it was true, conventional ideas, but nevertheless he regarded her as an intellectual equal; and he was delighted to note that she seemed to value his literary judgments. One day, after looking doubtfully at an illustrated edition of Grimm, she asked:

"What do *you* think of fairy-tales, as suitable reading—or hearing, rather—for a very young child? I've been rather

horrified"—she smiled as she said this—"to discover, when I came to read my own childhood's favorites to my little girl, what grotesque, and silly, and ugly things are in them. . . . But perhaps to a little girl of three they seem different."

Roger defended fairy-tales. "They have truths in them," he said, "—truths about life, that are left out of modern children's stories. Dragons and magic talismans: isn't life like that? If it isn't, it ought to be!" He laughed at himself, for fear she would think him too much in earnest.

"Perhaps . . ." she said slowly. "Dragons and magic talismans—they did mean something to me when I was a little girl. What *do* they mean? What do they mean to my Janet? Do you know?"

"They mean," he replied, "the mysteries of the grown-up world—things that you perhaps think she is too young to be curious about, but that she does wonder at, in some vague childish way."

"What mysteries do you mean? Love, and such things? But the—the *horrors*—in the fairy-tales! Oh, I suppose—yes, I know sex does seem rather awful in some of its aspects. Though I don't know why it need be so. But I see what you mean."

She was silent for a moment. "I was trying to remember my own childhood," she said. "I think perhaps you are right. Fairy-tales do give a truer idea of life than most children's stories. Still, I wish there were books, simple enough for a child to understand—not tracts, but real stories—showing life as it is, instead of in symbols. I'm afraid I'm a realist. Perhaps we'll have such children's books some day. In the meantime, one can at least answer their questions truthfully. . . . But Janet shall have her fairy-tales if she wants them."

Only—as Mrs. March later reported to him, Janet didn't seem to want them. "I'm afraid," said Mrs. March, "that she's a realist, like myself."

Their acquaintance had begun during Roger's junior year at Herald. It was interrupted for the vacation period, while Mrs. March was out with her family at their summer place on Lake Minnewinga; but in the fall her visits and their conversations were resumed. She questioned him more than once as to what he intended to do when he finished college, and

he answered vaguely and embarrassedly. At such times, the current of sympathy that only a moment ago had been flowing freely into talk was suddenly dammed up; and he became in an instant a book-clerk again, attentive and respectful. She put him down as "proud and sensitive." . . . The truth was, Roger didn't know what he intended to do with his life; such ambitions as he had were at once too indefinite and too high-flown to be confided, even to her.

He had started to write; his stories and essays were beginning to appear in the college monthly. They were, perhaps, more notable for their preciosity of style than for any knowledge of human nature that they displayed. But Roger was as contemptuous of ordinary human nature as he was of the rest of the ordinary world; these stories and essays were efforts to create a world of beauty and truth, in words at least, if it was impossible to create such a world in actuality. He had begun to think of himself as a writer and—if you please—a philosopher. He wondered why his things were printed in the college monthly; they were, in their delicate utopian way, attacks upon the morality of Plainsburg, and hence of Herald college. Doubtless the reason was that they were not understood.

One day that winter, during his last semester at Herald, he saw Mrs. March at her town home in Scott Park. Some books which she had ordered came, and as she had seemed in a hurry for them Roger left the store Saturday afternoon to deliver them in person.

Mrs. March's home was a large house in a large tree-shaded yard; there was a sound of young laughter as he came up the steps. Roger had expected to hand the books to a servant, but Mrs. March opened the door herself.

He saw a girl of sixteen fleeing through the room and up the stairs, screaming with laughter, and followed by a boy of about the same age, who held a pitcher in his hand.

"Oh, you brought them yourself!" said Mrs. March. It was nice of him, she added; and wouldn't he have some tea with her?

He said no, he must be going on.

"Nix on the rough stuff!" said the girl severely from somewhere upstairs.

"You *will* pour water down my neck, will you?" said the boy. "See how *you* like it!"

"Don't you *dare*!" said the girl.

"Cut it out!" called a boy's voice, from the back of the house. "Come on down, we've got a lot to do yet."

"We're getting ready for a party," explained Mrs. March. "I have a Sunday school class of boys, and they're inviting the girls. They're supposed to be making the fruit-punch now."

"Oh," said Roger and stood fingering his hat. "Your little girl isn't here?" he said awkwardly.

"Janet? No, she's over playing at one of the neighbors'. You won't change your mind and have some tea?"

No, he wouldn't; and he went away, startled and wondering. He knew that Mrs. March was in some way interested in Scott college, and that Scott was a Presbyterian college, and that Presbyterians were not so down on youthful gayety as the Methodists. Nevertheless, he was surprised to find so festive a spirit existing in connection with a Sunday school class. Sunday school classes had not been like that in Plainsburg; nor were the Plainsburg Sunday school teachers like Mrs. March.

But what he thought didn't particularly matter. . . . He had stood there, hearing this boy-and-girl laughter, catching a glimpse of a youthful happiness which he had never had, and envying it—envying most of all the kind, cool, maternal encouragement which this youthful happiness was having from Mrs. March. He stood there, hat in hand, desperately wanting to be mothered like that. . . . The only touch of authentic boyishness in his whole history, perhaps. . . . For what followed, though young enough in essence, was marked by a disconcerting and sometimes terrible precocity; a self-imposed defiant assumption of an adult rôle by one who had never known what it was to be a child.

CHAPTER TWO: The Young Diabolist

I.

IT had been inertia, and a lack of confidence in himself, that kept him in college that final year. It seemed to him that he was wasting his time there. . . . He was very much surprised to find himself the recipient of a Phi Beta Kappa key; and quite bewildered to learn that he had been chosen class-essayist. His classmates must have come to respect him after all.

But perhaps it was not respect that he wanted; perhaps he wished, rather, the simple human liking that he had so carefully guarded himself from ever getting. At all events, he received these honors with dissatisfaction, wrote an ironic attack on Herald college—which nobody understood and which was duly praised—and lost the Phi Beta key soon after receiving it.

2.

Having finished college, he was offered a regular position in the book-department of Howards. He had thought vaguely of doing newspaper work; and he had still vaguer plans of writing a book. . . .

But shortly before his graduation there had been a letter from Aunt Lucy, telling of a "stroke" which Uncle Abner had had. He had never been "quite the same since." And they were all so happy that he could soon come home and take charge of the store. . . . He did not intend to go back to Plainsburg; and if he refused to go, he must expect thenceforth to support himself. So he accepted the offer of a regular position in the book-department.

His refusal to come home must have seemed to Aunt Lucy and Uncle Abner strange as well as ungrateful. What better

fortune could an ambitious young man wish than a flourishing business in Plainsburg? But his behavior seemed less surprising to Aunt Judith; it was what she had all along expected. The Devil, she concluded in gloomy triumph, had got hold of Roger in White Falls, despite the pious influences of Herald college. . . .

His work in the store was pleasing to Mr. Higham, the manager. Mr. Higham raised his wages, and suggested that before long he might hope for a more responsible position in the department.

He was thinking, Roger realized, of firing old Billings.

To step into poor old Billings' shoes was the last thing that Roger desired. He would have scorned to be the head of a department in a store. He merely wanted, for a time, to be able to read, think, talk to a few people with ideas, while his own literary ambitions took shape in his mind. . . . He put in a good word for old Billings, spoke of how much he relied upon the old man's experience, and thus prevented his own promotion into—as it seemed to him—a cog in the department-store machine. . . .

And then, abruptly, Uncle Abner died.

Roger did not go home to the funeral. He was afraid, absurd as it may seem, that if he went back to Plainsburg, even for a time, it would hold him fast forever.

This behavior must have seemed to Aunt Lucy and Aunt Judith utterly heartless. . . . But he knew how rightly he had been afraid, when he glanced through a letter from Mr. Meakins, the family lawyer—a letter telling him, as it appeared at this first hasty glance, that he had been made one of the chief beneficiaries of his uncle's will. . . . So he had been forgiven for being the child of Henry Leland!

For a moment he felt reconciled to Plainsburg. It seemed to him, for that moment, that his ambitions had been absurd. He belonged in Plainsburg. . . . And the picture came into his mind of a brown-haired girl with whom he had once, once only, walked in the moonlight. . . .

A thorough reading of the letter quashed that sentimental notion. Uncle Abner, not long before his death, had made a new will, in which Roger had not been mentioned at all.

The letter went on to say that the validity of this new will

was perhaps questionable because of certain technical flaws. The courts, however, in many instances had accepted such an instrument as a legal statement of the testator's wish, etc. In fact, the other heirs had decided to contest Roger's right to inheritance. And would he care to make a settlement out of court? The uncertainty of legal proceedings, etc., etc.

Roger neglected to answer this letter. He did not care what became of Uncle Abner's property. . . .

Then came a letter from another Plainsburg lawyer, Mr. Hemenway; he was writing, he said, not as a lawyer, but as a friend. Roger's interests in this case needed looking after, inasmuch as some flaw had been found in the previous instrument in which Roger was named as one of the beneficiaries of the estate. If Roger's interests were not properly represented in court, both wills might be pronounced void. In that event, Roger's uncle would be declared to have died intestate; and Roger, not having been legally adopted, would receive no share of the estate. Mr. Hemenway made no suggestion, so he said, as to what lawyer Roger should choose to represent him; he could not, he said, with propriety make such a suggestion, being a lawyer himself. But as a friend he urged Roger to retain some one to protect his rights; and it should be some one who had Roger's interests truly at heart, as well as the necessary legal skill and experience. . . .

Roger neglected to answer this letter also.

And then there came a letter from Aunt Judith, which Roger laughed at and read over until he knew it by heart:

"Dear Roger—Heaven knows I tried to save you from the evil courses into which you have fallen. But the Lord has ordained otherwise than our human wisdom. The sins of the father He visits upon the children, and I have lived to see it. I know you to the bone, Roger Leland. You would spend in lechery and sin the fruits of all our toil and saving, if you could. But the Lord is on our side. You had better come to terms with us. I am sending you a paper to sign. If you have any sense you will take what you can get, and save trouble all round. A thousand dollars in cash is a good deal. Take it, and spend it on your sins, and may you rot in the gutter all the sooner. I knew you were lost to hope when you

didn't come home to attend the last rites. You are as bad as your father was before you. But I shall continue to pray for you. Your loving Aunt Judith."

The enclosed paper was a release of all claims which Roger might have, of whatsoever nature, against the estate of the late Abner Tilloway, in consideration of the payment of the sum of one thousand dollars.

Roger signed it, and duly received a certified check for that amount later in the summer.

3.

He did not want to keep that money. Nor did he want to send it back. He wanted to make what in later life he would have called a "gesture" with it—a spendthrift gesture. This thousand dollars had for him a symbolic significance, and required to be disposed of in an appropriate and symbolic manner. It had been accumulated in a moral way; and it ought to be used for some immoral purpose.

The young proprietor of a small new book-store in White Falls called upon him—how he learned about the thousand dollars, Roger could not guess—and made a practical proposal for an investment. He needed, he said, a partner who knew books and had a little money—a thousand dollars would do. He himself would supply the business ability; and together they would build up a great book-store. "They don't know what a real book-store is, here; we could show 'em!" It was true enough; they would have made ideal partners in such an enterprise. Roger could see his thousand dollars bearing its fruits, year after year, in steadily increasing profits. In a way, he would have liked to do it.

But that would be using Uncle Abner's money in the same way in which it had been earned. Roger would not give his Uncle's ghost that satisfaction. . . . He would not become a successful business man.

—That phrase, though he laughed at it, still rankled: "*take it and spend it on your sins.*"

That was what Roger would have liked to do with this money. . . . But, absurdly enough, he had no sins to spend it on.

4.

He had become tired of living a dream-life. He had begun to look about wistfully at the real world. At first, coming from Plainsburg, he had expected to find in White Falls and St. Pierre some glimpse at least of a new and different life. These cities had failed even to come up to Aunt Judith's expectations in offering opportunities to be wicked. Or perhaps he had overlooked and neglected these opportunities. He had been occupied with other things. But books and ideas, poetry and dreams, which had sufficed him for four years, were no longer enough. He was on the verge of twenty-one.

It wasn't that he wanted to fall in love. "Love"—the word had come to seem ugly to him. It had taken on the respectable dullness of the world in which it existed. It was tinged with property considerations, with the ideal of "honest work," with conventional mutual expectations and demands of all sorts. It had become meaningless, except with reference to the cautious stupidities of which it was a part. No, it wasn't, in any commonly understood sense, love that he wanted.

Nor, in any current sense of the word, "romance." There had been a romance in his boarding-house, and one woman had run away with another woman's husband. By accident Roger had known of it before it became an open scandal—returning home late one night he had come upon them kissing in the dark hallway. The woman's tragic look, upon being caught, aroused only his scorn. He had always thought her a silly sentimentalist; and she had never seemed sillier than now. He was sorry for the man; poor devil, she would inflict that look upon him—would harp on that note of tragedy, to give to their kisses a dignity which she would otherwise have felt they lacked. Roger was relieved when she and her airs of doomed and outlawed passion departed from the house.

He knew also of other stolen kisses, taken in a scared mischievousness, and having their zest in the fact that they were forbidden fruit. That was not his idea of adventure, and he did not at all envy the thrill of mere rashness that seemed to pass for rapture with these illicit philanderers.

It was none of these things that he desired, but something stranger, more willfully alien to the moral conceptions of Plainsburg—something really joyous and beautiful.

Poetry does hint at the possibilities of such happiness; and it is not strange if some boy should occasionally hope to find it outside the shadow-world of rhyme!

5.

In the boarding-house to which he had recently removed, there was a girl named Fanny Mears. She had come from the country at the age of sixteen, learned stenography, and gone to work in an office. Until recently she had lived in an endowed Home for Working Girls—a place with a matron and the strictest rules: a girl could not go out with a man more than once a week; the man must first be brought before the matron and meet with her approval; and the girl must be back by a certain hour in the evening. Some quarrel with a girl-friend there, her room-mate, had caused Fanny to leave and come to this boarding-house. But her habits remained what they had been. She “never went anywhere in the evening”—a fact which impressed her fellow-boarders and gave her a reputation for saintliness. She stayed at home, and read over and over again a certain novel by Mrs. Humphry Ward.

So Roger discovered, in the talks by which they became acquainted. These talks were at first fragmentary, and were conducted, standing, in the hallway. True, there was a parlor which was supposed to be used for conversational purposes; but it had been given over to card-playing, and Fanny avoided it, as did Roger. However, it is tiresome to stand on one foot and then on the other talking to a young man; and so, eventually, she invited him into her room. She did so the first time with a flushed consciousness that it was her bedroom.

The maid-service at the boarding-house was none too efficient; and as Roger, entering, trod upon the ancient carpet, little puffs of dust marked his footsteps; and a comb with which Fanny had combed her hair, and which retained a tangle of loose hairs, lay in sight on a dresser. She was not disturbed about these things; she did not notice them—but she was conscious of the presence of the bed. She placed Roger's chair so that he looked away from it—and, as it chanced, at the comb.

She seated herself opposite him in another rocker, and after

offering him a stick of gum, which he declined, took one herself, and masticated it delicately.

"It's been a terribly hot summer, hasn't it?" she said by way of opening the conversation.

Roger assented.

"Well—I suppose we'll be saying next winter how cold it is!" she added.

"No doubt," said Roger.

"But there's one thing," she went on, "the summer nights are cool here."

"Miss Mears," said Roger desperately, "what do you think about life?"

She looked surprised. "Why, what do you mean?"

"Well," he amended, "what do you think about Dick Forrest, then?" He had to ask questions in order to be able to keep up a conversation with her. He simply could not reply to her line of remarks. And he really wondered what she thought about Dick Forrest.

Dick Forrest was a new boarder; a "promoter" of wild mining schemes, in which he himself believed devoutly; a man of thirty, with a boyish, romantic air, big and broad-shouldered and handsome in his way; a general favorite with women. He had caused rather a flutter here at the boarding-house. It was evident from his manner that he considered himself a killer of hearts. But he had rashly asked Fanny to go to a vaudeville show with him, and she had coldly refused.

"I'm very much afraid that Mr. Forrest isn't the right sort of a young man," she replied primly to Roger's question.

"Just what *is* the right sort of young man?" Roger asked curiously.

"You know as well as I do!" she said.

Upon further questioning, it appeared that the right sort are impressed by a girl's inaccessibility. They would ask her a second and a third time. The more she refused, the more impressed and anxious they would be. In fact, she confided to Roger, Mr. Forrest had, after recovering from the shock of his refusal, asked her again. "So you see!"

"I see," said Roger. "So Dick Forrest may turn out to be the right sort, after all?"

Fanny replied that she believed every man in his heart respected a girl for doing what was right.

"But," Roger urged, "is what is right a matter of time? If eventually—why not now?"

She warmed to her subject. She knew what fellows were like, she said. If a girl went out with a fellow the first time he asked her, he wouldn't have much respect for her. He would probably think she'd let him kiss her. A girl, she went on, couldn't be too careful. Fellows would get familiar if they weren't kept at arm's length. As it was, they were always making suggestive remarks in a girl's hearing. It was bad enough to have to listen to the dirty jokes that were passed around the office, without letting a fellow think he could get fresh with you. When the right man came along, he would appreciate the fact that a girl had kept herself to herself.

Roger looked at her. He noted her sufficiently ordinary lips. She was keeping them pure for some man. There was, she believed, a man who would value the purity of those lips; devoutly she believed it. And perhaps she was right. Perhaps there were such men!

In a subsequent conversation she became somewhat confidential. She was in a discouraged mood; Dick Forrest, as Roger knew, was devoting himself to a frivolous young stenographer on the floor above; and perhaps Fanny was inclined to regret that her own standards of propriety were so high. So Roger surmised, although Fanny's confidences were apparently remote from the present situation. . . . It didn't seem, she complained, rocking in her chair and chewing her gum sadly—it didn't seem as if there was anybody you could trust; the fellows you didn't expect anything better from, most of them; but sometimes a girl that you thought was a nice decent girl would deliberately try to put ideas into your head. . . .

Roger gathered that this had happened at the Home for Working Girls, and had been the cause of Fanny's leaving. So there had been a serpent whispering "ideas" even in that Paradise! And these ideas, it would seem, had continued to haunt poor Fanny. It was pretty hard sometimes, she said, for a girl to remember to act like she ought to; and "nobody seems to appreciate it, if you do!"

Roger looked about at the room. Its ugliness he could take for granted—its flowered wall-paper, its decaying plush-upholstered furniture, its idiotic tidies; these things were a part of boarding-house life. But the room exhaled the musty odor of ancient dust; fine particles of dust floated peacefully in the glare of the gaslight, and settled grittily on his hands. And he had the uncomfortable suspicion that there were fragments of dried gum on the under side of the chair in which she sat, of evenings, re-reading that novel of Mrs. Humphry Ward's.

Roger wasn't very fastidious on his own account. He could have forgiven a girl any amount of disorder if she were pre-occupied, as he was, with more important intellectual concerns; but Fanny had hardly that excuse. What, he wondered, did she expect to offer the right man, when he came? He wondered if she might not perhaps by this time have achieved a little something in the way of personality, if she hadn't been so busy trying to forget that she was a human being. She wanted to be a young lady angel. Well, there she was—a not very fascinating example of that species. But if pure lips were the prime consideration, she had them!

Roger was at first surprised to find that she expected from the right man no similar immaculateness. But, upon second thought, that seemed logical enough. Purity was for her to furnish; from the man was required the ability to maintain it in the style which it was accustomed to expect. White-fox furs, he discovered, were her own private romantic symbol of the reward due to her purity.

But beyond such trifles, she demanded nothing; and was prepared to endure much, dutifully. Roger pressed her hard with questions. "Suppose he were a drunkard, and beat you?" She replied: "I'd be a good wife to him just the same."

So saying, she rocked back and forth, lost in some beautiful reverie of white-fox furs. . . . Roger changed his boarding-house shortly thereafter, and it was thus that he remembered her—rocking back and forth, waiting.

6.

Late one evening that summer, having finished the volume of Nietzsche he had been reading, Roger strolled down town.

His mind turned to pitying thoughts of Fanny. At about midnight, these thoughts were suddenly interrupted. A highly painted young woman was speaking to him.

He paused, listened, shook his head at her in annoyance, quickened his step, and walked on. . . . The young woman must have been surprised to hear him, a moment later, laughing aloud.

He had stopped stock-still, and was laughing at himself. He had abruptly realized his own likeness to Fanny. . . . He, too, had been an inmate of a semi-charitable and quasi-religious institution. He, too, had strictly obeyed its rules; and he, too, upon leaving that institution, had continued to be a model young person. He, like Fanny Mears, "never went anywhere in the evenings"; he stayed at home, and read Nietzsche. His saintliness was even more ridiculous than poor Fanny's. She, at least, expected to gain something by it. . . . He turned around and looked back after the painted young woman; but she had gone.

7.

It was in the mood that followed this incident that Roger resolved upon a course of action which would have seemed to justify Aunt Judith's blackest suppositions as to his sinfulness. . . . And yet—sin is of the blood; and this project of Roger's was born of the brain. To go against what one believes to be right, because one cannot help it—Roger was altogether too much of a Puritan for that. Any such surrender to mere sensual propensity he would have scorned. His plans were made with a stern willfulness, and somewhat against his own temperamental preferences—in a mood of moral earnestness, as a kind of duty.

He began to wander about the streets of White Falls, at night. But perhaps his countenance of grim resolve deterred the painted young women. He did not look like what Aunt Judith would have called him, a wicked young libertine. He looked like an earnest young moralist. And he was let strictly alone.

But he was not to be swerved from his purpose by such a failure.

He reflected that there were certain places—in St. Pierre, though, oddly enough, not in White Falls—professedly dedicated to pleasure.

He found out where these places were, and went there.

He walked past a row of drab-looking frame houses; from the windows of one of them a girl in a red kimono leaned and called "Hello, dearie!" . . . He walked past, straight ahead, until he reached the river, and stood looking at the reflection of the moon in the water. He was attempting to reconcile his dream with reality. He stood there a long time; and then he turned and walked back up the street of drab houses, resolutely.

The girl in the red kimono was gone from the window, and there was a sound of music from inside the houses. He went up the steps of one of them at random, following two youths of about his own age—college boys, probably. He felt for a moment an angry resentment at these boys; they were laughing, careless, light-hearted; they could take this experience as it deserved to be taken, simply, without undue thought. They had no dreams which interfered with their frank enjoyment of the pleasures their world had to offer. . . .

He entered a room filled with the smoke of cigars and cigarettes. A girl at a little table, dressed in a short frilled skirt that came to her knees, was listening to a red-faced man who looked to Roger like a drummer; he had apparently just finished telling a funny story, and was repeating the point of it over and over while she laughed loudly. At another table a very fat woman in what resembled evening dress sat drinking beer with a young sailor. Several girls were seated about, in chairs and on sofas, in languid attitudes. One of them, a girl with red slippers and red stockings, a Spanish shawl wrapped about her, and a red rose in her hair, jumped up at the entrance of the two boys, and ran up to one of them. "Hello, sweetheart!" she cried, and threw her arms around him.

"Hello, Dolly," he replied.

The other youth asked her, "Where's Elsie?"

"Oh, she'll be down pretty soon," said the girl.

"All right, let's have a drink," said the youth.

They sat down at a table; a tall, black-haired girl strolled over.

"Hello, Billy! Hello, Jim!" she said.

"Hello, Madge—sit down and have a drink."

A waiter with a dirty apron appeared and stood beside the table. The red-faced drummer at the other table repeated the point of his story once more, and the girl in the short skirt laughed loudly. A tired, foreign-looking boy at a piano in the corner twisted himself about on the stool and began to pound on the keys. The fat woman and the young sailor rose from their table and went through an open doorway up a stair. Roger stood still, looking at one of the two girls who sat languidly on the sofa. . . . She looked somehow, in spite of her crimsoned lips and red-rouged cheeks, like Fanny Mears, the girl he had known at the boarding-house.

In response to his gaze she rose and went up to him, swaying a little on her hips, not very gracefully. "Hello, kid!" she said. She held a cigarette in her hand, and as she approached him she put it to her lips, removed it, tilted her head, puffed a tiny cloud of smoke at him, and smiled. He had seen that sort of thing in melodrama. It was intended there to convey to a simple-minded audience that the girl thus introduced was "tough." Roger had not supposed that girls thus advertised themselves in real life.

She stood there before him with an affected air of jauntiness, one hand on her hip, the other outstretched to one side to flick a cigarette ash to the carpet. A sickeningly sweet perfume exhaled from her. "Well," she said, "shall we have a little drink, you and me?" She laughed, a forced laugh that wasn't very convincing.

"Certainly," he replied. She turned to one of the little tables and sat down, crossing her legs carefully so as to leave one pink-stockinged knee exposed. She was wearing a loose silk negligé, which looked new, but which already had an egg-stain on one side and a beer-stain on the other; it was fastened in front with what was apparently a large piece of ten-cent-store jewelry, and was drenched with that strong perfume. Having sat down, she worked loose her pump, so that it dangled from her toe as she swung her foot back and forth. Roger was still pondering her puzzling likeness to Fanny Mears.

The waiter stood beside them.

"What will you have?" Roger asked her.

"I'll have the same as you," she said. "Beer, whisky, or—" she laughed "champagne!"

"We'll have champagne, then," said Roger, in the casual tone of a man of the world.

The effect was electrical. The girl was startled out of her pose, and she looked at him with parted lips of awe. The waiter, on the other hand, looked embarrassed. "We don't carry the champagne," he said. "We'll have to send out for it. So you'll have to pay me first."

Roger gave him a bill. He took it respectfully, and went away.

The girl looked around her, proudly, and exchanged glances with the other girl on the sofa. Her own glance said, "Look what I got!"

She laughed again—that laugh that was so unlike a real laugh. What *was* it like? Roger became suddenly sensitive to the sound of the laughter that was being uttered in the room about him, at the other tables. The girl who was listening to the red-faced man—her laugh was a loud whinny. From another girl came a cackle. Inhuman sounds, with no mirth in them. This girl's laughter, too, reminded him, vaguely, of an animal—a sick animal, at that.

With every movement she exuded that heavy, sickening perfume; she must surely be insensitive to it herself—her sense of smell must be dulled. She lighted another cigarette, and rearranged her legs so as to show her knee and a glimpse of an upper leg beyond the stocking. "It's been a damned hot day, hasn't it?" she said.

Roger assented.

"One thing though, it gets cooler at night."

"You know," Roger said awkwardly, "you remind me of somebody else."

She leaned forward eagerly. "Do I?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "Very much indeed!"

"An old sweetheart of yours?" she asked.

"Oh," he replied, a little embarrassed, "I wouldn't exactly say that Fanny was a sweetheart of mine. We were friends."

"Fanny!" she exclaimed in genuine astonishment. "Is that her name? Why, *my* name's Fanny!"

"That is odd!" he agreed.

The waiter came in with the champagne glasses, hurried out, and then bore in a pail of ice as though it were a pail of diamonds. A bottle, wrapped in a napkin, protruded its neck from the ice.

The girl who had been sitting on the sofa had risen and gone over to the window. Now she strolled back, brushing against Roger's shoulder as she did so. She turned and smiled at him apologetically, and Roger smiled formally back at her. She was a short, fat, round-faced girl, with her hair in braids, wearing a short dress, child's socks, and carrying a china doll. A caricature of childishness.

The girl with Roger—Fanny, as it oddly enough seemed that her name was—gave her a glance of angry warning.

The waiter lifted from the pail the napkin-wrapped bottle.

The fat girl paused and looked on interestedly.

The waiter solemnly produced a corkscrew.

Fanny suddenly lifted her hand. "Wait a minute, Eddie!" She turned to Roger. "What do you say we take this up to my room and have it there?"

"All right," said Roger.

She jumped up, and seized the glasses. "I'll take these," she said. "Come on, kiddo!" She took Roger's arm and walked triumphantly past the fat girl to the stairway. There she paused, while the waiter, with the treasure, preceded them up the stair. She turned, gave a last spiteful glance back at her defeated rival, and then went up. Roger followed.

"Peggy's always trying to butt in where she's got no business," said the girl over her shoulder to him. "She'd have been sitting down with us in a minute, and you, just to be polite, would've asked her to have a drink—and she'd have drunk up half our champagne. She hasn't got any manners at all. And the trouble is, Mamma Gunther is sick, and everybody does whatever they damn please around this place now!"

"Who's Mamma Gunther?" Roger asked.

"Oh, she's the lady that runs the place and looks after the girls," was the answer.

The little procession entered a tiny room which smelt of that same heavy perfume. There was a bed, a chair, and a little table beside it covered with strewn playing-cards. Beside

the single window, on the wall, was a mirror and in front of it a dressing-table filled with bottles of perfume, jars of cold-cream, boxes of powder and cosmetics, combs, brushes, dirty towels, and the scattered articles of a manicure set. A curtained wardrobe against the wall bulged with clothes. There was a layer of dust on the window-sill and the dressing-table; and the mirror had a round space wiped on it to see in.

The waiter steered himself between the wardrobe and the dressing-table, and put down his precious burden on the floor. He cleared the cards from the little table, and arranged the glasses.

"Will you sit on the chair or on the bed?" Fanny asked, seating herself in front of the mirror to re-powder her face and spray her neck and bosom with perfume. Since she was already in the chair, Roger seated himself on the bed. His foot touched some object on the floor, and he stooped to pick it up. It was a novel—no, not by Mrs. Humphry Ward.

"Oh, that's my book," said the girl. She reached out her hand for it, and laid it on the dressing-table. "A friend of mine gave it to me. I've read it several times." She hitched about to the little table.

The waiter poured a sparkling yellow fluid into their glasses.

The girl reverently lifted her glass, touched his, closed her eyes, and drank.

"God!" she said. "Isn't it good!"

Roger privately thought that it tasted like soda-pop. He had never tasted champagne before.

The waiter refilled their glasses and went away, entirely satisfied with his tip. The girl drank again, greedily, and Roger replenished her supply. This time she sipped it, watching the bubbles.

Champagne! Roger drank it down. It was a fluid guaranteed to banish dull care, to free the mind, to unloose the tongue, to induce the spirit of careless happiness. Roger finished his second glass of that much advertised elixir, and looked at the girl. She ought to seem to him desirable and lovely; but she seemed merely dull and stupid, like her namesake of the boarding-house.

"Ain't it funny," she was saying, "that I should have the

same name as your sweetheart!" She leaned forward sympathetically. "Did she throw you over?"

"We—disagreed about certain things," Roger said disingenuously.

"Ah!" she replied. "Ain't it always the way! Did she have hair like mine?" She turned and glanced at herself in the mirror. "And eyes like mine?"

"Yes—she looked very much like you," Roger affirmed.

"Well, life is a funny proposition, isn't it? Here we are, you and me. . . . You haven't told me your name. . . . Roger? . . . Well, Roger, here I am, a dead-ringer for your sweetheart!" Her feet, disengaged from their pumps, clasped and caressed his ankles. "Call me Fanny!" she said, crooningly.

He writhed inwardly at her sentimental misconception of the situation. "All right—Fanny," he said.

"What was your pet name for her?" she asked.

He thought. He hadn't much invention, and he disliked lying. It hardly seemed worth while to carry this misunderstanding any further. . . . Besides—

"What do you mean?" he demanded abruptly. "Are you suggesting that I pretend *you* are the other girl?"

"Sure!" she said.

Roger made a grimace of distaste. "I'm afraid I don't care for that game," he said.

"What's eating you?" she returned sharply. "Pour me some more of the bubbles. I don't know why *you* should kick. I'm just trying to be nice to you!"

She had the air of one whose feelings have been hurt.

He refilled her glass, and shivered involuntarily. He had just envisaged in imagination her arms around him, and he recoiled from that thought. He realized now how impossible it would be to remain with her. And he had better tell her so at once.

"Well, don't be shy, kid," she advised him, and smiled.

She bent toward him, slipping one arm out of her *négligé*, and then paused to reach for the champagne bottle. Her face was painted with an exaggeration of the rosy flush of health; but her body, half-naked, had an unhealthy wanness—like a potato-sprout growing in a dark cellar. She lifted the

champagne bottle, poured out the last glassful, and drank it off.

He rose. "Fanny," he said, apologetically, "I must go."

She stared at him, puzzled and a little abashed. "What's the matter?" she demanded.

"Nothing," he replied, and turned toward the door.

"I don't get you," she said, "but you can't beat it away like that! Not after coming up to my room. My time is worth money, kid."

She blocked his way defiantly.

He handed her a bill.

"Will that do?"

She looked at the bill, and stuffed it into her stocking. "I don't get you at all," she said. "What did you come here for?"

"That's what I've been wondering myself," he said.

"I got in wrong with you somehow," she said humbly. "I know that. Don't go—please. Stay just a minute. Sit down."

She was still blocking his way, and he could not go without pushing her aside. He did not want to touch her. He sat down again. She came, and sat on his knee, and put her arms about his neck. Her body reeked of that strong perfume.

He felt nauseated.

"Can't I make you happy?" she whispered.

"No," he said.

"Don't you like me?" she asked.

He discovered, after that momentary struggle with nausea, that he had lost all feeling except a kind of tired pity. He felt as though he were paying a visit to an importunate invalid.

He wished he could get away.

"I'm sorry, but I don't," he said.

"I like *you*!" she said, clinging to him. "I *love* you!"

"And the fact that I don't—makes no difference to you?" he asked.

"I don't care!" she declared. "You can hate me, if you'll only stay. You can beat me, if you want to!"

"But I don't want to," he said, and got up, disengaging her arms.

"Won't you come and see me again?" she pleaded, still clinging to him.

"Never," and suddenly pushing her aside, he went out—while she cursed him with strange and filthy curses.

8.

As he walked out of the door, the red-faced drummer paused at his side and lighted a cigar, and the sailor-boy, following them, took a deep breath and threw out his chest.

"Well!" said the red-faced drummer, "nothing in the world like 'em, is there? I can have all the kinds of girls I want, but this is the kind that suits me!"

"Sure!" said the sailor-boy.

The red-faced man nudged Roger in the ribs with his elbow, and asked slyly,

"What do you say, kid?"

Roger made no reply, and hurried down the steps.

"Liars!" he was saying to himself, angrily. Their pretences to pleasure were just as false as the pretences of those miserable girls. Pleasure—none of them knew what it was. "They are sick—all of them!"

The sound of the banging piano came through the open window, the hoarse voice of a girl, singing, and a burst of noisy laughter. The trappings of gayety. . . . But what a dismal affair it really was—a sort of ministration to the impotency of anxious, cowardly, sick men by cold, stupid, pathetic, dull, dutiful girls. Into these melancholy houses a person of healthy wish could stray only under a strange misapprehension. The perfumes stank like medicine, and the laughter was a sick cry of pain. They were not places of pleasure—they were hospitals for people of feeble will and diseased imagination.

If that was what the world had to offer, he would go back to his books and dreams.

9.

But the world, it seemed, had something else to offer. . . .

In the music department, next to the book-department at Howard's, there was a piano, upon which pieces of music were played for prospective customers; and there were two

girls, who played these pieces of music, according as they might be "classical" or "ragtime" pieces.

Sally was, for the brief period, the "ragtime girl."

Her plump predecessor, who ever since Roger's stay at Howard's had pounded out the flashy rhythms of the current popular tunes, had married and left the store; and for a while the "classical girl," an affected young woman with a long neck and a languid Rossetti manner, had with much apparent distress and scorn taken over her duties. And then, one morning, Sally was there.

Roger heard of her before he saw her. Two clerks, a fat middle-aged man and a young man with protruding teeth, were talking at the drinking fountain.

"Did you see the new ragtime girl yet, Parksy?" asked the younger clerk.

"Have I? You bet!" said the fat older clerk rejoicingly.

"Some baby-doll!"

"You're on!" And with a wink the other clerk departed.

Miss Price, one of the women clerks, lean and pince-nez'd, came up. The younger clerk lingered to ask her:

"Have you seen the new ragtime girl yet, Miss Price?"

"Hmph!" said Miss Price.

The young man exposed his protruding teeth in a grin.

Roger walked away with him, and asked, "Who is she—this girl?"

"You haven't seen her yet? Where have you been? Asleep all morning?" the young man asked jocularly. "Oh, I hear she's a cabaret-singer. You ought to take a look."

Roger expected to find there some bold and impudent hussy. He did not want to see such a person, so he did not look. He forgot all about the new ragtime girl.

Until later in the day—when he heard from the music department a sound of soft laughter, and looked up. Leaning back against the piano and talking to her "classical" companion, was a slim girl with strange-colored tawny hair and restless movements—and lovely laughter—as lovely to see as to hear. It rang out again, clear, gay, delicious, a bubbling of the springs of joy, a chiming of the bells of pleasure. . . .

"Mr. Leland? Mr. Leland?"

There was old Billings, peering about for him with half-

blind eyes over his glasses. "Ah, here he is!"—to the customer in tow. "Mr. Leland will find it for you."

10.

That day he talked to her. But, telling the story of that encounter, Roger was able to recover in memory only the mood of it, hardly at all the picture; that had been overlaid by other pictures of her, later, more real; he could not remember what dress she wore, nor what either of them said to the other. What he felt about her—that was all he could remember.

And what he felt about her was simply that all his wishes had miraculously come true!

He heard many remarks about her in the next few days. The rumors as to her being a cabaret-singer settled down presently to the admitted fact that she had had a try-out as a pianist in a cabaret-restaurant in St. Pierre the winter before. That was not a very sensational fact. But the talk about her continued—a kind of excited undertone, a buzz of whisperings. These whisperings meant rather more than they ever definitely said; they carried a scandalous implication, jocular and vague from the men, and vague and malevolent from the women—a suggestion all the more powerful because it was so undefined. Doubtless these implications were not more than half-serious—being merely the traditional implications of immorality which attached, in White Falls as in Plainsburg, to "art" and "artists" of every kind.

But it must have been a trying time for Sally. Howard's was a very respectable store; and she did look like a wild bird among tame ones! The men made errands which took them in her vicinity, and stopped to talk for a moment, with a touch of meaningful aggression in their apparently innocent badinage; they were, in fact, being as unduly familiar as the women were being unduly cold. And Sally received it all with a kind of easy gayety and easy scorn.

But Roger remembered seeing her face, as she sat at the piano in an unaccustomed moment of repose, with a shadow of puzzled sadness on it—a look, it seemed to him, like that of a child who cannot understand why people are unkind.

He tried to think about her sanely. But the sight of her charmed him out of mere reasonableness on the instant. That tawny hair of hers, with a suggestion of tangled wildness about it, transported him into some leafy realm of the imagination, which she inhabited as a dancing dryad. He knew he wasn't being sensible—but those restless movements of hers, neither quite graceful nor at all awkward, seemed to him truly enough the very gestures of youth—the stirrings of awakening physical sensibilities in a strong young body. He thought of her, in more realistic terms, as skating, running, leaping,—some action that would set free the smothered energy in those slim, solid, eager limbs. It wasn't her proper fate to sit on a piano-stool in a department store, he was sure of that.

She hadn't, he thought, the ingenuous air of a girl who has lived a sheltered life; there was a touch of expert brusqueness in her way of speaking. But she wasn't prematurely adult, either. She was girlish, a creature of still undeveloped and unknown and fascinating feminine possibilities.

Roger thought of her gay hardness of manner as a sort of rough calyx that concealed and protected her young emotions. In only one way, it seemed to him, her loveliness had quite come to blossom—in her laughter. Her face had a delicate beauty of contour; but he didn't think of her as statically beautiful. He thought of her as the living embodiment of joy. No one who had ever been troubled by doubts or fears could ever laugh that soft, delicious, careless laughter of hers!

Her slim, eager body—but why attempt to convey in terms of her body an illusion that after all had its origin in Roger's mind? She seemed to him joyously and utterly and triumphantly physical, a being created to be happy in the life of the body, unhampered by the soul with all its maladies!

Yet if it was an illusion, it was one which his fellow-clerks shared, after their fashion. They also thought that Sally hadn't any morals. It may seem strange that they could all so recklessly impute to this young woman such a character. But as to Roger, his imaginings concerning her, if reckless, were vague. It wasn't, with him, a question of her actual life-experience, but rather of her temperament; not of what she had or hadn't done, but of what she essentially was.

She was happy and honest and unafraid. In a world of mechanical dolls—self-advertised as “good” or “bad,” but equally mechanical, equally unable to stir his fancy—here was a living girl! That was his breathless and overwhelmed impression of her, and that was all that mattered to him.

So, where these others were trying to discover or invent some evidence that would justify their envious scorn, Roger looked up to her as a superior being, and gave her a kind of awed worship.

II.

His attitude, no doubt, puzzled her a little. But his air of grave and shy respect won her regard, and she became in return less airily indifferent, more responsive.

Perhaps it might be said that she singled him out for friendship. And if so, he failed to take due advantage of this encouragement. No wonder she was puzzled! How should she guess that this tall, shy, awkward, black-haired, blazing-black-eyed youth was too much her adorer to be quite her friend?

Yet that, if she could have known, was why the young man never even offered to take her to a “show.”

In truth, after having despaired of his ideal, Roger was content with its visible existence in the same world with himself. He was wholly unenvious in his admiration. He had no wish for any nearer intimacy with this lovely creature. She was still too much of a dream for him to take cognizance of her as an actual person.

And before he could have begun to think of her as anything but a poem made visible, she was gone.

At first, he thought indignantly that Howard’s had dismissed her on account of the “talk.” But no, it appeared that she had left of her own volition; no one knew why.

The classical girl again discontentedly pounded out ragtime for a few days; and then there was a new ragtime girl. Sally was, in the routine of daily matters, forgotten . . . even by Roger.

CHAPTER THREE: The Search

I.

IT was by a book that he was reminded of her.

An odd book, which had been ordered from London, some years before, by a local book-lover, himself a queer character—as one must have been, in St. Pierre, to know of the existence of such a book as this. And then, having ordered the book, he died, and his widow refused to pay for it; for it was, considering its size, an expensive book; why should a respectable St. Pierre widow pay twenty dollars for a thin volume bearing the imprint of the Bodley Head and entitled *Pagan Love*? But the rare-book dealer in London, from whom old Billings' predecessor had ordered it, refused to take it back; so there it was, waiting a purchaser that it would hardy find in St. Pierre—a dead loss to the department, and a proof to old Billings that it didn't pay to go out of your way to get unusual books for customers.

Roger heard the story when, at the annual stock-taking, the book was taken from a special locked case in which various expensive items were stored.

After looking it through, he bought it for himself.

The author was not named on the title page; but he was evidently one of the fin-de-siècle poets—the book, though in prose, was obviously written by a poet.

It was ostensibly an essay; it began with a quotation from Horace, and thence proceeded to a consideration of love as that emotion was understood among the Romans and Greeks, together with some modern comparisons. Pagan love, it would seem, was something very different in its implications from what we nowadays call love. So far there was nothing extraordinary about the essay; but after these impersonal pages, it began suddenly to be an eloquent and ironic confession of faith.

"They say," wrote this anonymous poet, "that the spirit of

pagan love is dead—has been dead these nearly nineteen hundred years. But I know better. For am not I alive? And not alone, surely. That I will not believe! There must be others, in this modern world, who feel as I feel. There must be girls—I confess I have not found them in Mayfair, nor yet in Bloomsbury—who can meet my pagan demands without shock or disappointment. But perhaps I have not gone about finding them in the right way. The modern way is to advertise. Very well then, I do hereby advertise. And, as when one advertises for a maid-of-all-work, one specifies that she must be neat, cheerful, and willing, so I shall specify exactly what I am seeking. I seek happy companionships in which what is vulgarly called passion shall have a dancing quality, long since banished from the definition of that word; let me say, rather, I seek playful and joyous friendships in which no intimacy is withheld; relationships based upon a mood which is best set forth in the old mythologies—the serene indifference of gods and goddesses and the careless ecstasy of fauns and nymphs; generous comradeships of the moment, inconsiderate of the dull responsibilities of workaday life, existing for their own sake, without foolish elaborate preliminary pretences and without tremendous consequences, free equally of the burden of hope and of fear.”

“*Sally!*” thought Roger. She had given him a true glimpse of this ideal freedom and joy. *She* was a pagan!

But there was in this book a challenge he could not ignore. This anonymous poet had sought for pagan love in the modern world. Had he ever found it? No matter, he had refused to believe that it did not exist for him!

“When I find her,” the poet had written, “I shall know her by the light in her eyes—a light at once laughing and serene, radiant and evanescent, like the reflected gleam of stars on wind-blown water. I shall find there the assurance of the reality of my dream; in her eyes, and in the free gestures with which she tosses her head and disarranges into new and careless beauty the locks of her hair.”

That had been Sally. He had seen her, known her—and he had let her go.

But she proved that the pagan spirit lived still in this ugly world.

"Modern love," wrote the poet, "is a heavy and serious thing. In the companionship I am seeking, there is no mutual aching need, no desperate yearning for more than the moment can give, but only a gracious and joyous meeting of lips and limbs in embraces whose abandon comes from an ultimate and unvexed self-possession. The kisses I seek are not the painful and agonized kisses of tragic love, not the kisses of despairing surrender, premonitory of disaster, tasting of bitterness, hopeless and helpless kisses, tokens of heartbreak to come, but laughing kisses, as untroubled and inconsequent as butterflies—caresses that bestow happiness rather than grasp at it too anxiously or too eagerly. And when the hour of such companionship is ended, we shall part freely and without regret—leaving to others the oaths, the ceremonies, and the studied arrangements by which such happiness is vainly sought to be prolonged; and to others likewise the remorse for oaths belied, and the white lips and trembling hands by which one credulous fool reminds another of their hour of past delight. . . ."

And so once more there began in Roger's mind a debate concerning his relations to the world about him.

This was what he, also, desired. . . . And perhaps many others desired this pagan happiness. And while he dreamed of it, perhaps they were finding it. . . . He had taken too seriously, perhaps, a mere difference in terminology. When that clerk in the store had said, "Some baby-doll!"—hadn't he meant all that Roger imagined of Sally as the embodiment of his pagan ideal? "Pagan ideal" was a dead phrase out of a book; "some baby-doll" was living language; the meaning was the same. . . . Books had betrayed him; he had turned away from Sally back to them, and read poetry instead of enjoying her living companionship.

What he desired was, after all, perhaps, a pleasure to be had for the taking. Yet there was one thing more he wanted—the pagan right to this pleasure, the right not to have to be ashamed in taking it. Modern ideas of good and evil destroyed the possibility of such happiness wherever they touched it. "Bad" girls were even more tiresome than "good" girls. He remembered, with a grimace of chagrin, the two Fannys, so very much alike. . . .

And yet—between these regions of virtue and vice there must be some middle ground where the natural human instincts held sway. There were evidences that the pagan spirit really existed in White Falls and St. Pierre. There were parks, dance-halls, theaters, restaurants. There must be young people who went there to enjoy themselves. There must be a kind of girl like Sally, a girl delightfully human.

2.

It may seem absurd and unjust that Sally's name should be connected with the course of conduct in which this debate of Roger's ended. Assuredly she was in no way to blame for anything he did. It might be asserted, much more excusably and with better grace, that in Roger's life there ensued a period of wildness—until he found her again. But that was not the way it seemed to Roger.

And this is Roger's story. So it must be said that he proceeded to search for her. . . . Not for her as a person; but for the kind of happiness of which she was the symbol.

She herself, as he might have discovered if he had tried, was the organist in the Second Methodist church of White Falls, not far from where Roger lived; she was at the organ in the choir-loft, or at the piano in the prayer-meeting room, on the evenings when Roger was searching for her pagan beauty and happiness in parks, restaurants, dance-halls, road-houses. . . .

In this odd quest Roger was fulfilling, at last, Aunt Judith's prophecies. There was only one way to settle that inward debate; and that was by outward experimentation. If it were true that the world offered him happiness on his own terms, then he had no right to sit in his book-lined room and despise the world. It was his duty to reach out and take that happiness.

If it were true!—for he still doubted its truth, even while he believed it. The world seemed to him a dismal place. Could there really exist, in such a world, the pagan and human instinct of play—companionships in which there was a free and joyous expression of the fancy and the senses alike?

He would find out. . . .

3.

He began his search on Saturday, with a week of vacation idleness ahead of him, wearing the white flannels that seemed the appropriate costume of leisure, and with an incredibly large sum of money in his pocket.

That Saturday at sunset he was at Rivoli Park in St. Pierre, which he had visited in his college days, and which he knew had the reputation of being a place where acquaintance was easily picked up. He walked along the boulevard at the edge of the lagoon, watching the canoeing couples drift past. Only drowsily dipping an occasional paddle, they seemed lost in a dream as they floated over the waters silvered with the sunset. That magic light of sunset touched his loneliness, and the scene for a moment seemed beautiful. He could have this happy companionship. He need never be lonely any more. . . .

But then began again the debate between his credulity and his doubt. These happy couples—were they really happy, or only trying to be, or pretending to be happy? If they were—was it the kind of happiness he wanted? Wasn't there a secret deadly seriousness in this game? Weren't these girls hoping to make husbands out of these young men, husbands who would work for them and buy them golden-oak furniture and lace curtains? And weren't the young men having to pretend to that kind of interest in the girls? Was the kind of frank, laughing, irresponsible happiness he wanted to be found at all? . . . Or was it, perhaps, the commonest thing in the world and the easiest to achieve—the meeting of youth and girl who could be to each other for an hour, and all the more completely because only for an hour, happy playfellows, without thought of to-morrow! Yes, perhaps—and his tawdry adventure began to be invested with all the colors that flamed gorgeously in the sunset sky.

A girl was sitting idly on the grassy bank of the lagoon, looking out toward the sunset. She was young, slight, fair-haired, with a creamy complexion. Roger impulsively went up to her, took off his hat, and said, "Shall we take a ride?"

She looked at him, smiled, hesitated, and then said, "No—

I really can't. I'm waiting for some one." She smiled again in a friendly way.

Roger blushed, and said, "I'm sorry!" and hurried away. As he did so, it occurred to him that he should have stayed and talked to her. She had been apparently reluctant to refuse his invitation. Perhaps she had wished to be urged. But he had not known what to do except to take her at her word. . . . She continued to sit there idly; the minutes passed, and her hypothetical "some one" did not come. She looked about restlessly. He thought of going back to her; but that was impossible.

As he waited, another young man, awkward, graceless, overcoming his shyness by an air of braggadocio, went up to her. Roger saw this youth as a caricature of himself; of course he would get turned down. The girl seemed to regard him coolly; but he sat down beside her, and engaged her in a conversation that became more and more animated; and presently they arose and went over to the landing where the boats were hired. . . . Roger was scornful of her for choosing this youth's company in preference to his own; and at the same time ashamed of himself for not having had the enterprise to behave like that youth. . . . Was it something in his manner that had made her reject his invitation? He wondered, and became increasingly self-conscious. There were other girls there, waiting no doubt to be asked to go canoeing; but his nerve was shattered; he couldn't, after that first failure, approach them.

He stood on the boulevard, staring wistfully at the lagoon. In one of the canoes the fair-haired girl was smiling tenderly at her companion. Roger turned to go away.

4

"Got a match?"

It was a boy in white flannels, with a cap thrust rakishly on one side of his curly brown head. A college-boy, doubtless. College opened in a few weeks. . . . Roger gave him the match. He lingered sociably. "Have a cigarette?"

Roger accepted one, and the youth held a light for him. He nodded toward a group of passing girls. "Well, how do they look to you?" he asked. "Pretty good pickings?"

For an instant Roger despised him; and then he remembered that "pretty good pickings" was the living phrase for the thought in his own mind—he realized that they were both upon the same pagan quest. He laughed.

And so began his acquaintance with Jack—Jack Squire, or Speyer, or something like that, a last name that Roger could not remember. He was, he said, a sophomore at Scott. He had been spending a few weeks at the home of a college friend, on one of the lakes, and he was to spend another week with another friend before college opened; in the meantime he had a week in White Falls, with nothing to do. He was, as Roger later learned, the son of a clergyman in a little up-state town. An odd youth, by no means so ordinary as Roger at first thought him—the most interesting by far of the various young men with whom he inevitably became acquainted in the course of his quest. A touch of imagination, at least, distinguished him from the rest of that race so incomprehensible to Roger, the race of young men.

Jack began to tell of an adventure that had befallen him last year, beginning at this very spot. He had been accompanied by his friend Louis, whom he was presently to visit. They had picked up a couple of stenographers here, who had led them a merry chase for a couple of months. . . . The upshot of this discourse was the advisability of having a pal. "The girls usually come in pairs," said Jack, "and it makes it a whole lot easier when there's a couple of fellows together." He asked Roger if he was looking for "anybody in particular," and having learned that Roger wasn't he invited him to "team-up" with himself for the evening.

Roger would have been disconcerted at the prospect of having the company of a college boy on such an adventure, except that he had now become acutely conscious of his own shortcomings as an adventurer. He needed help. He could not refuse this offer of companionship. Conscientiously he explained, "You see, I'm new to this—this sort of thing." And Jack replied generously, "That's all right—I like a fellow that's interested in something besides chasing girls. I like a fellow that's got an idea or two in his head!"

"I've got the ideas," said Roger. "So long as it's understood that you're to look after the practical side of the partnership."

"Oh, it's easy enough to pick 'em up," said Jack, "if you know how to go about it."

So Roger waited for Jack to demonstrate how easy it was. Jack looked about him, and commented upon one girl after another, but made no move toward them. Finally Roger turned to him and said, "I think you're just as scared of them as I am."

Jack laughed. "To tell the truth," he said, "we both need a bracer!"

"A what?"

"A drink. A fellow ought to have something to liven him up at the start. Come on, let's go over to Pop's. There's plenty of time."

They started back toward the entrance of the park. "Of course," said Jack, "a fellow oughtn't to be all lit up; he can't expect a decent girl to talk to him if he is. But a drink or two puts you into the right frame of mind. Makes it easier for you to kid the girls along."

They went into the bar-room of a hotel near the park gate, a palatial establishment of polished mahogany and brass, with electric-illuminated paintings of naked ladies on the walls. They put their feet on the rail, and Roger's companion urged whisky upon him. "A good stiff whisky. That'll buck you up."

Roger felt the need of being bucked up. He had been inwardly dwelling upon his own inadequacy for such an occasion as the one in prospect. A wish for pleasure, he said to himself, was not in itself a social asset. He did not dance; he could not tell funny stories; he had never learned the art of flattery; in fact, as he thought about it now, it seemed to him that there was nothing to make him welcome in the society of the pleasure-loving.

He confided these doubts to Jack; and Jack assured him that they were all nonsense. "You'll feel different about it in a minute or two," he said. And, truly enough, after that first drink, these things didn't seem so important. He began to feel a renewed sense of self-respect, together with an excess of grateful friendliness to Jack, and he ordered another whisky.

Jack, upon seeing his roll of bills, asked him if he had robbed a bank, and began earnestly to tell him he oughtn't to

take so much money along a time like this ; he might get woozy and spend it all, and then where would he be? He himself had done that once and he was in a devil of a fix until his next month's allowance arrived. Roger had better let Pop take care of it for him. Pop was the proprietor of the bar, and, as Roger knew, a celebrated friend of college boys. It was not from any distrust of Pop that Roger refused to bank his money in the cash register till to-morrow. He explained to Jack that it was only a hundred dollars, that it was part of a large sum that had been given him by a kind relative to spend on pleasure, and that it would make him very unhappy not to spend it. This was his party, he insisted, and Jack wasn't to spend a cent that evening—"You're my friend, aren't you?"

At this point, they ordered another whisky. Pop intervened, and told them that they had had enough whisky to drink so early in the evening, and they'd better have a ginger-ale. "Oh, all right, Pop, if you say so!" Jack replied obediently, and introduced Roger to Pop. He was a large, kindly-looking, but very dignified man—not at all Roger's idea of a saloon-keeper. He asked about Jack's friend, Louis, and they discussed Louis's "hangovers," which it seemed sadly interfered with his pleasures. Pop said: "That boy can't stand very much. He ought to go easy. And so had you. But this young fellow," and he indicated Roger, "can put down quite a bit without being much the worse for it, if I'm not mistaken." Roger felt much pleased; it seemed to him the greatest compliment that had ever been paid him. Pop consented to join them in their drink, and poured for himself a small glass of fizzy water. "Some people can stand whisky, and some can't. I've never touched a drop of it myself since I was a young fellow."

"He's right, at that," said Jack. "Pop doesn't like to have the boys leaving here all tanked up—and when they haven't got sense enough to stop, he tells 'em."

Pop wished them good-evening with a quasi-paternal kindness which touched Roger, and he replied, "Thank you, Pop!"

They went back to the park. . . . As they walked in the open air, Roger felt slipping from him the mood of self-confidence he had had in the bar-room. There he and Jack had been superior beings; fortified with the warm sense of each

other's friendship, it had not seemed to matter what the girls might think of them. Now Roger was beginning again to be conscious of his raw inexperience. Only his confidence in Jack remained.

5.

They did not go back to the lagoon. "I know a better place," said Jack. They went past flower-beds rich with lovely blossoms, through a space filled with benches and tables for picnic lunches, and presently found themselves in front of the deer-park, where they halted for a time and watched the young deer frolicking.

"They look out of their eyes at you like girls," said Jack, and it seemed to Roger that this was a very beautiful thing to say. Jack had the soul of a poet. . . . After a silence, Jack said: "I was up in Canada last summer with Louis, and shot my first deer. I guess it'll be a long time before I ever shoot another." He looked sidewise at Roger, hesitated, and said, "You know, I wouldn't tell this to anybody else—but it made me feel bad. Sort of made me sick. I guess I wasn't cut out to be a hunter. I happened to be alone—it was an accident that I hit it, anyway—and I ran up to where it lay on the ground. It was still alive, bleeding and looking at me in a funny sort of way. I wished I hadn't done it. It gave me a sick feeling in my stomach. And that was the last hunting I did."

He laughed, as if rather ashamed of such a confession, and then said, "Have you noticed that it's the fellows that come here to look at the deer! I suppose it's because they look so much like girls—don't they? Fact, you never see anybody but men around here. The girls hang around the pheasant-farm over there, where we're going." He nodded in that direction. "Well, shall we stroll along? We'd better get busy if we want to cop some out for ourselves."

They strolled along. Roger reflected that the preliminaries to this simple adventure had already been of a rather complicated sort. First one found a companion of one's own sex. Then one got bucked up with a few drinks. What now?

They reached the wire netting behind which the cock-pheas-

ants in all their splendor lorded it over their meek dust-colored hens. Clustered in front, watching them with fascinated eyes, were several groups of girls; and scattered about, watching the girls, were stray groups of young men like themselves. Jack and Roger took up a point of vantage, and commenced their survey.

The girls seemed unaware of their presence; all except one, whose glance, shy and startled, Roger caught as it turned from him back to the pheasants behind the netting. They were dark eyes, purple, almost black, and very wide. He was instantly reminded of the deer, and of Jack's story; and for a moment he too felt rather sick. Was this merely a kind of hunting, and had they bucked themselves up with whisky in order to have the recklessness needed to exploit the frightened curiosity of eyes like those?

And then a laughing group of girls approached, and Roger's attention was attracted by a girl on the edge of the group, who instead of looking at the pheasants was looking about at the scattered men. Her eyes met his, lingered a moment with a strange intent gaze, and passed on. That glance seemed an instant electric message between them; and after the momentary shock of it, Roger thought to himself, "She is a hunter, too!"

He looked at the other girls, who appeared to be so intent upon the birds behind the netting, and observed that they were continually and quietly looking about—not at the boys, it seemed, but at the landscape, with glances that nevertheless did not fail to take the boys into their survey. Again and again he felt a fleeting contact of glances. While he was appraising them, they were appraising him.

But these glances were more quiet, less intense—and he looked back at the girl whose roving eyes had momentarily thrilled him. He saw her gaze meet that of one youth after another, and he recognized in them the same shock of attention which he himself had felt. She seemed to have made herself the center of a circle of electrified young males—none of whom, however, approached her.

It was as if there were some invisible barrier which they dared not cross. Roger wondered at it. Again her eyes met his, with the same direct impersonal invitation, and he felt

again the magnetic attraction that radiated from her. In those intent eyes, flushed cheeks, slightly-parted lips, in the whole eager pose of her body, was the spirit of the quest, frank and unashamed.

He turned to Jack and said, "That girl in lavender looks interesting!"

Jack looked and laughed. "You're wasting your eyesight," he said, "looking at her! You don't think you can start anything with *her*, do you? Not with her own crowd along, anyway." These girls, he explained, were probably from Miss Brant's exclusive school up the river. "Why, that girl would *faint* if you spoke to her—or call the police!"

Roger looked at her again, and this time he noted that her linen frock was crisp from the laundry, her white shoes really white. She was a child of leisure. He couldn't expect her to join him in an evening's play—because she didn't dare. She had come with her friends to look on. She would watch, curiously and enviously, the play of others, and that eager look in her eyes would go unanswered. But suppose he did answer it? While he meditated this rashness, the group moved on, giggling; and the girl in lavender threw back a last glance at the circle of young men that had broken its ranks to let her through untouched. Roger had an impulse to follow, but he checked it. He would play the game according to the rules.

He turned then to the other girls, who were looking after the departed ones with covetous glances. *Their* white shoes, he noted, were dingy and inclined to run over at the heels, their pretty dresses wrinkled and much worn, though disguised with little touches of newness, a bright belt or collar, or a smartly figured veil drooped over a shabby hat. Shop girls and stenographers. They had come here from work instead of going home to dinner, and they were munching sandwiches and popcorn while waiting for the concert to begin. They were also, it would seem, waiting to be asked to play. They did not mind the fact that they had never seen these boys before; they did not care if they never saw them again. That was the essence of such play as this—the adventure of the unknown!

Roger turned to his companion. Jack was looking fixedly in one direction. Roger followed his glance, and again caught

sight of those wide purple-black eyes whose shy glance he had seen at first. She, their possessor, had turned back to the netting, and was talking eagerly with her girl friend, pointing to the birds, and laughing. Every gesture of her little body was instinct with the knowledge that she was being looked at by the handsome, smiling, curly-headed youth at Roger's side.

"Well, I made her look at me!" said Jack triumphantly. "She's a shy little thing, isn't she? Did you see those eyes? How would you like to kiss them to sleep? Shy and deep, kissed to sleep. A poem could be made out of that."

The little girl was whispering to her friend—a tall, handsome, robust blonde, with masses of yellow hair piled around her head. She seemed to Roger a dazzling picture of health, sanity, strength. She turned and gazed at them, first at Jack, then at Roger, coolly. Her blue eyes held neither invitation nor fear. Apparently she was judging them. "What is she thinking of me?" He could not guess. That cool glance out of steady blue eyes disconcerted him. He met it with a look of proud indifference—"What do I care?"

But he did care. He was wondering what he had to offer this magnificent creature, that he should presume to scrape acquaintance with her. What, more than any other of all these staring youths?

Jack, at his side, murmured, "I'm strong for Pansy! She'll give a fellow a run for his money. The quiet ones are the trickiest."

Roger was still looking at the tall blonde.

"I see you're smitten with Goldilocks," said Jack. "So that's all O. K. Well, shall we go after them?"

"What's the right thing to say to them?" Roger asked.

"Oh, anything that comes into your head," Jack responded airily. "Take it easy."

"I see. Just—hello, kid! I like you!—?"

Jack frowned at him. "Not like *that*!" he protested. "You'd get the frozen eye for certain. Those girls aren't chippies, they're decent girls—that is," he explained, "they're out for fun and all that, and willing to go a long way if the going's good. Of course," he added, "a lot of these girls have 'been there' before, it's not their first time; but Pansy's different, I can tell that! And anyway, if you want to get along

with girls, you mustn't try to rush things at the start. You'd better leave it to me. You wait here till I call you over."

After a moment's hesitation, Jack went toward the two girls. As he did so, the tall blonde drifted a little distance away. The little brunette stood still, looking earnestly at the pheasants. Jack paused beside her, pushed his cap a little further over on one side of his curly brown head, looked through the netting, and then turned to her with a smiling remark that Roger could not hear—evidently about the pheasants. She laughed, and replied, and they began an amiable conversation. Presently he nodded toward her companion, and she pouted; then he looked toward Roger, and said something that made her giggle. She then led him over to her friend, and there ensued what seemed to be a formal introduction.

It was precisely like a picture in the illustrated Book of Etiquette that Roger had cynically scanned in the book-department—it lacked only the façade of a country-club in the background. The deportment of the little violet-eyed girl as she effected the introduction had the assurance of perfect conventionality. Jack was very much the polite young gentleman as he took the cap from his dark curls and bowed to the tall blonde. They were pretending that everything in this casual encounter was gentlemanly and ladylike.

So this, said Roger to himself, was the way one began an evening of play with shop-girls—with a fine pretence of conventionality. This, the prelude to a happy, irresponsible hour!

Jack beckoned to him, and he went, reluctantly. "I'll have to see it through," he said to himself.

6.

"Roger," said Jack, "I want you to meet my friends. Miss Lockwood, this is Mr. DeCoverley. Miss Ellis—Mr. DeCoverley."

The tall blonde acknowledged the introduction with a cool smile. The little dark-eyed girl giggled and said, "Pleased to meet you, Mr. DeCoverley, I'm sure!"

But why "Mr. DeCoverley"? Had Jack forgotten his last name, as he had Jack's? Then he remembered that there was supposed to be a convention among college boys of not using their real names in these adventures. What name, he

wondered, had Jack taken for himself? He found out a moment later, when Pansy made some giggling reference to "Mr. Milton."

Milton! and DeCoverley! So that was Jack's notion of a joke. Or perhaps a simple mnemonic device; John Jones and Roger Smith would be hard to remember—they would forget which was Jones and which was Smith. But John Milton and Roger DeCoverley—! It proved that a college course in literature might be turned, after all, to practical purposes. Roger wondered what he himself had got out of his own very extensive acquaintance with literature, out of the reading of thousands of stories, essays and poems dedicated almost exclusively to the subject of love, to serve him in this practical emergency. Less, he feared, than nothing.

Pansy—Miss Ellis, her name was—was saying, "I've been hearing things about you, Mr. DeCoverley!"

Her tone was playful, familiar, and vaguely provocative. This little remark contained, as Roger bewilderedly recognized, half a dozen shades of meaning. He replied to one of these meanings, "I'm sorry!"

To which she responded, "Oh, it isn't as bad as all that!"

They were presently entangled in a series of random remarks, none of which had any definite meaning, and which seemed merely to have as their excuse the fact that they simulated the familiar conversation of intimates. Roger saw that the way to become acquainted was to play at being acquainted already. He had heard this sort of talk before, but had never practiced it. He found it surprisingly easy. No one knew what anybody else was talking about—and nobody seemed to care.

But Roger's mind, by habit impatient of vagueness, soon rebelled against this game.

"If you've heard anything about me, it must have been from Jack. What has he been saying?"

In an instant the fantastic world of pretended familiarity was brought down with a crash.

Pansy, in an effort to save the game, turned to Jack appealingly and asked, "Well, what *was* it you said?"

"I said you were a writer, Roger," was Jack's prompt response.

Roger made an effort to conform. Mr. Milton, he averred,

was also a writer. True, Jack admitted, they were both writers; but Roger was the successful one—you ought to see the roll of bills in his pocket! Nevertheless, Roger insisted, Mr. Milton was by far the more distinguished writer.

This, Jack may have feared, was getting altogether too far away from the girls. "Roger," he said, "don't be so formal and distant! Don't call me *Mister* Milton! Call me Jack. I want Pansy to get used to hearing me called that."

"Who is Pansy?" asked the little dark-eyed girl innocently.

"Oh—a girl I know!" Jack replied airily. "An awfully nice girl! By the way, you should have heard Roger poetizing about Miss Lockwood's hair. 'Goldilocks, Goldilocks, let down your hair!'"

The little dark-eyed girl pouted. "That's the way! All the men are crazy about Cecile's hair!"

So that was her name—Cecile. An affected name, Roger thought. He turned back to her friend, and with a labored effort to be whimsical remarked, "But *you* should have heard Jack raving about your eyes. He was poetizing, too. 'Pansy's eyes are shy and deep, lovely eyes to—'" At this point Jack stepped on his foot, and Roger realized that he mustn't say "kiss to sleep."

"Oh, it's me you're calling Pansy!" said the little dark-eyed girl. "My name is Nettie."

"To me you will always be Pansy," Jack said earnestly.

Was Cecile, Roger wondered, waiting for him to pay her silly compliments? . . . He tried to think of something to say to her. The best he could manage was to ask stiffly:

"Is it time for the concert to start?"

"Not yet," she said.

"Not for a long time yet," said Pansy.

"Shall we walk over to the lagoon?" Jack suggested.

"Oh, yes, let's!" said Pansy.

They started off, Jack and Pansy leading the way arm in arm, Cecile and Roger following more sedately.

Roger realized that he should never have entered upon this adventure. He reviewed in his mind the arguments that had prompted him to it. He had questioned whether there was such a thing as light-hearted play in the world; he had determined to find out. Well, he no longer doubted—there was

play, and there were playmates, but only for the light-hearted! He had mistaken himself; he wasn't a pagan reveler—he was a Plainsburg philosopher. Jack could be pagan enough; and Pansy would respond to him with a pagan quality of her own. But he—he couldn't think even of anything to say to the girl at his side.

"Do you like music?" he asked desperately.

"Yes."

That monosyllable, and nothing more. It was not fair of her, he thought. She ought to have made her answer a little longer. "Yes" hardly counted. It was her turn to say something. . . . And presently she did!

"Do you?" she asked.

"Do I what?" Roger returned vaguely.

"Like music?"

"No," he said challengingly. That at least was better than saying yes. They could get up an argument about it.

"No?" she repeated in surprise.

"No!" he said firmly.

She made no reply. It didn't matter to her, evidently, whether he liked music or not—and why should it matter? Why should she be interested in the tastes and opinions of Mr. Roger DeCoverley?

Milton! DeCoverley! Those ridiculous names annoyed him. Perhaps that was the difficulty—he had begun this adventure by acquiescence in a lie. He hated hypocrisy of every kind; this very adventure was an effort to discover if the hypocrisies of a commercial civilization left any room for the spirit of play. "And yet," he said to himself, "in modern life, hypocrisy is doubtless the essence of play. Pretending to be what one is not, that is what 'having a good time' means. People are tired of being what they actually are, they want to be something else; they want to escape from ugly realities. That is why this occasion was varnished over at the start with a kind of pseudo-respectability. These girls wish to conceal from themselves the ugly reality of being picked up. But is the reality of it so ugly? Would it seem ugly to them if we had all frankly admitted at the outset who we are and what we want of each other?"

And then: "But do I really want to make myself known to

these girls? Even to Cecile? She is not deceived by our palaver about being writers. She would doubtless prefer that we pretended to be the sons of millionaires. But the reality, a book clerk with the habit of speculating about the universe—wouldn't interest her. And do I want to know *her* as a real person? Perhaps it is not as a person that she interests me, perhaps all I care about is her rich health, her serene quiet strength, her beauty of blue eyes and golden hair and red full lips. Do I want to hear those lips talking nonsense? Do I really want to discuss the universe with her?"

But why not? Jack and Pansy, a few feet ahead, were discussing the sunset. They were agreeing it was beautiful, and they were happy to find that they had the same tastes in common. Their fondness for sunsets constituted a bond between them, a bond which justified and intensified their affectionate intimacy. The magic of the attraction which had led them to each other served also to gild for them the passing hour. They shared, at this moment, a sense of the beauty of life. . . . Why couldn't he feel that way, too?

Cecile was a stranger to him. She would always be a stranger. And it would be his fault.

He made a new effort. "It's lovely at this time of day," he said. What a banality!

"Yes," she answered, "isn't it?"

What was the use? He might as well keep silent.

They reached the lagoon, and found that all the canoes had been rented. It was proposed by Jack, and warmly agreed to by Pansy, that they go to Fancyland and dance.

Roger awkwardly admitted that he did not dance. "We'll teach you!" said Pansy. "Everybody has got to learn before they can dance."

It was useless to protest. He decided to submit.

"And Mr. DeCoverley will take us there in a cab," said Jack.

"Oh, how nice!" said Pansy.

In the cab she sat on Jack's lap, and Cecile relaxed softly against the cushions in the shelter of Roger's arm. He thought to himself that to these girls an important element of having a good time was the sense that money was being spent upon them, and he determined to provide at least that element of revelry.

7.

Fancyland, which Roger saw for the first time that evening, was St. Pierre's popular pleasure-palace. It had an air of polite respectability, and Roger wondered if that were not one of its chief attractions for the girls who went there. The doorman looked like a clergyman in livery, and the maid at the door of the women's dressing-room was spinsterish and prim. The place looked from the outside like a large handsome residence. Inside, the same effect of dignity was maintained. The spacious ballroom was decorated in quiet green and ivory tones. No pink cupids disported themselves over the walls. The floor, Pansy had enthusiastically declared, was perfect, and the orchestra "the best and highest-paid in town." Obviously no low resort, but a place of quasi-aristocratic elegance!

Roger and Jack waited in the lounge until the girls should rejoin them.

"I hope you don't mind my suggesting that cab," said Jack.

"I was glad you did," said Roger, "and I wish you'd suggest anything else that will help make the occasion a success."

"Oh, it'll be a success, all right!" said Jack. "Things are going fine—don't you think so?"

"I can't really say that I'm enjoying myself tremendously," Roger confessed. "Are you?"

"Well," said Jack, "we all need a few drinks to liven us up. A cocktail or two. And if you want to blow in some of that wad of yours, you can treat us to champagne—that always makes a hit with the girls. There's a special brand here you can buy without going bust in one fell swoop. It tastes like the real thing, too."

Pansy and Cecile came up, freshly powdered and rouged and odorous of cheap sachet scents.

"Lovelier than ever!" exclaimed Jack. "And ready for a bite to eat?"

Pansy admitted that she was starving to death, and Jack led the way upstairs to one of the little private dining-rooms. It was a narrow booth with a table in the center and long leather seats on either side. Pansy and Jack seated themselves together on one side of the table, and Cecile and Roger took their places opposite.

"First," said Jack, "we'll have a cocktail. I guess a dry martini would about hit the spot?" He gave the order to the solemn waiter.

Pansy, who seemed to be quite at home here, seized the menu and began a series of eager recommendations. The lobster, she said, was lovely. But no, she was too hungry to struggle with lobster to-night. "Let's have some good solid food! No, not steak. The fried chicken is wonderful!"

The cocktails arrived, and a kind of hilarity ensued in which Roger endeavored to join. But it was a fictitious effort, and he wondered why it was that the sense of good-fellowship which that drink in Pop's bar had produced in him was not repeated here. In a sense it was repeated, for he found himself breaking his silence and talking to Jack with the feeling of a true understanding between them. He could even joke a little with Pansy. But with Cecile he remained as dumb as ever. The cocktail seemed only to increase his sense of her being a stranger.

She too seemed embarrassed, and when another round of cocktails was ordered he noticed that she drank hers at a gulp. He followed her example. Was she as afraid of him as he was of her?

Then, as dinner was being ordered, he remembered the champagne. "Oh, how *nice!*" cried Pansy, and Cecile gave him a warm glance of appreciation. He thought of taking her hand. Jack and Pansy were sitting very close together, clasping hands and talking gayly. Cecile, her little flash of merriment over, sat fingering her glass and looked indifferently at the opposite wall; doubtless she was waiting—waiting for him to say or do something. But he, ashamed of his silence and shyness, remained shy and silent beside her.

The waiter brought the food, and over their shoulders poured a pale fluid into the glasses. It sparkled invitingly, but it reminded Roger of another occasion that he preferred to forget. He drank it without enthusiasm. He found himself suddenly without appetite, viewing with a complete lack of interest the fried chicken adorned with white paper frills, the mashed potatoes disposed in rosettes along the side of the plate, and the little mound of poisonous-looking peas. Cecile, too, he observed, was rather indifferent to her food, if not to the champagne. But Pansy and Jack ate heartily.

Roger sipped his champagne gloomily, and tried to think of something to say to Cecile. Her bearing toward him had changed again. She was no longer so coolly indifferent. She began to talk, as if in an effort to interest him. She told him about herself and Pansy. They were clerks in a department store in St. Pierre, in the "lajerie" department. She herself had not worked there long, and had only recently become friends with Pansy. This was the first time she had ever been to Fancyland.

Roger, not knowing how to return these confidences without repudiating the fiction of being Mr. DeCoverley, listened interestedly, but made no reply, only asking questions to keep her talking. She sipped steadily at her champagne, and he refilled her glass with the last in the bottle.

Pansy and Jack were making two bites of the maraschino cherries that crowned the sherbets. Pansy held a cherry between her teeth, and Jack put his lips to hers and bit into the cherry—or rather, as she complained, took it all. After they had thus disposed of their own cherries, they begged their companions'. Roger pushed his over without a word. But Cecile, who had drained her glass and frowned to find the bottle empty, said, "Trade you my cherry for a drink!" Jack gave her his half-filled glass, and the cherry-biting contest continued.

The music, which had been playing at rare intervals since they arrived, and for a while had ceased, now began again in earnest, flooding the whole house with its volume. "Oh," said Pansy, "I promised to teach Mr. DeCoverley to dance. You don't mind, Jack, if I dance this first one with him?"

Jack smiled benignly, and Pansy took Roger's hand and ran from the room down the stairs. After a little awkwardness and embarrassment, he was found to be an apt pupil. Or so Pansy declared. "You've got it! You're dancing perfectly well."

It was true that he felt more at ease with Pansy. He talked to her without constraint. And he even ventured to indulge in an irony. She had been saying how wonderful the dance-floor was, and how superb the orchestra. "And," he added, "how utterly respectable everything about the place!"

"Yes," she replied in good faith, "isn't it!" She nodded toward a balcony in which sat rows of people looking on at the

dancers. "Every once in a while," she said, "you'll see a bunch of old maids and preachers up there—committees of reformers, sniffing around for vice. Well," she said proudly, "they never see any on the floor of Fancyland! There's half a dozen bouncers here to put a stop to any rough-stuff."

"Bouncers?" he asked, and looked around for some burly scowling fellows in shirt-sleeves.

"There's one now," she said.

He looked and saw a man in a dress suit. "Is that a bouncer?" he asked.

"Sure."

"So even the bouncing is respectable!" he commented.

"Why," she said, "the dancing here is so respectable that I've heard college boys say that a college prom is a riot compared to it."

"Then why," he asked, "do the reformers have such suspicions?"

"Oh," said Pansy, "of course there's a lot of girls here who are just out after men. They come here all the time—'regulars,' the men call them. They'll dance with anybody. You slip the bouncer half a dollar and point out the girl, and he takes you over and introduces you. And you may have noticed in our private dining-room, the waiter never comes in without knocking. For that matter, there's a latch on the door. Oh, of course if you're with a *gentleman*, it's all right. A little privacy is appreciated by any girl. And what nobody sees don't hurt anybody!"

"Very true," said Roger.

"Do you know?" she said, "that you've made an awful hit with Cecile?"

He thought she was reproaching him for his bad manners, and began to apologize. "I'm sorry I'm spoiling the party," he said.

"Spoiling the party?" she repeated. "It's a *lovely* party! And I mean it about Cecile. She's crazy about you. She was telling me in the dressing-room."

"But—why?" he asked.

"Oh, she likes a fellow not to be too familiar. At first I was kind of afraid of you, myself—you were so stand-offish and proud."

(Stand-offish and proud!—so that was how his misery of shyness had been interpreted!)

"But," Pansy went on, "that's just the sort of thing Cecile likes." She giggled, and added, "I really think you've got her goat!"

"What do you mean?" asked Roger.

"Oh, nothing! Come on, let's dance the encore, and then we'll have to go back."

When they returned, Jack pretended to be much embarrassed by their sudden entrance, and Pansy pretended to be angry with him. The waiter came in with their demi-tasses and the check. Jack and Roger quarreled politely over the privilege of paying for it. "Oh, very well, Alphonse, have it your own way!" said Jack. And then, the music beginning once more, he and Pansy romped from the room.

Roger sat down at Cecile's side, again embarrassed and silent. He was envious of Jack and Pansy. They had fallen so easily under the illusion of companionship! He sipped his coffee; it could not make his mind any more fatally clear and cold than it already was—empty, it seemed, of everything except a kind of dumb chagrin, a hateful sense of aloofness from the spirit of the occasion.

Cecile reached for Pansy's glass, and drank what was left in it.

"Shall we dance?" he asked.

She shook her head. "I don't want to dance," she said. The silence became intolerable, and then she spoke again. "I don't feel like dancing, somehow. Do you remember what you said about music? I was just thinking about that. Sometimes I don't like music, either. To-night I don't." She suddenly put her golden head on the table and began to cry.

Roger put his arm awkwardly about her. "What's the matter, Cecile?" he asked. She did not answer, but presently lifted her tear-stained face, looked at him, and put her head on his breast. Then, after a moment, she lifted her head, threw it far back, and whispered, "Kiss me!"

It was doubtless unfortunate that this first kiss should have tasted of tears and champagne. The circumstances surrounding the event were not, for a person of his temperament, the happiest. Yet these circumstances had been provided, by the

world in which Cecile and Roger lived, to foster just such intimacies as this. Cecile herself had acquiesced in these arrangements; she had made herself half-drunk, in order to be in what was apparently the necessary preliminary state of mind. As for Roger, drinking had served merely to increase and exaggerate his habitual scepticism. He was, in his ignorance of the ways of girls, intellectually quite unprepared for such a sudden intimacy with one whom he had felt but a moment before to be still an utter stranger.

His instincts, it must be said, understood this situation well enough, and answered to it without hesitation. But his mind, which seemed a separate part of him, looked on, at first in bewilderment, and then in an observantly critical and inquiring spirit.

He felt strangely divided into two persons—one a young man who was sunk deep into the long-desired solace of this sweet and violent contact of the flesh; and the other a being aloof and disinterested, watching the scene curiously, intent upon both its actors, boy and girl. . . . The boy pressed his lips eagerly upon the girl's moist, parted lips; she drank his kiss thirstily. Breathless, he lifted his mouth from hers; the girl put her arms tight about him, and drew down his head, whispering, "Kiss me! Kiss me!" It was reminiscent of the way she had gulped down the cocktails. It seemed as if she were seeking, now as then, some kind of drunkenness, some kind of forgetfulness. . . .

The embrace relaxed, and the girl leaned back, closed her eyes, opened them again, and said, "It's no use." And again her head sank upon her arms, and she was crying.

"Cecile!" he exclaimed.

She stopped crying, looked for her handkerchief, and wiped her eyes. "Oh, it's nothing!" she said. "Don't mind me. I'm sorry I'm being silly. Come on, let's dance!"

8.

They danced, and at intervals they kissed. Their lips, their hands, their bodies, at these times, became the instant pasturage of a mutual instinctive hunger. But a passion as strong in Roger as any physical passion, the passion of understanding,

found itself defeated. They couldn't talk to each other—and since that first kiss they had stopped trying to talk to each other. In this situation there was for Roger a disappointment that became, before the evening was over, an exasperation. These kisses held a promise, false or true, of an intimacy that seemed ridiculously incongruous with the alien silence out of which they blazed. Kissing, he and Cecile remained strangers. . . .

The occasion, when the party broke up late that night, was declared an immense success, and they arranged for another on Sunday evening. They put the final touch of magnificence upon the occasion by taking the girls home in a cab.

"Well," said Roger, when he and Jack stopped in the back room of a little saloon to talk it over, "I don't understand. Why should that girl have cried when she kissed me? If she felt that way about it, why kiss at all?"

"Who knows why a girl does anything?" Jack retorted. "That's the way they are!"

"Pansy didn't cry, did she?" Roger asked naïvely.

"No, but it wouldn't have surprised me if she had. You just can't tell about girls! Anyway, we've made a fine start, and the thing to do is to keep it up. What do you say we drive out to White Swan lake tomorrow night, or to Rosetta on Lake Minnewinga?—if you really want to make a dent in that wad of yours!"

"It's all the same to me," said Roger. "But it's chiefly my curiosity that makes me want to go on with this thing. I'd like to know why that girl cried."

"What difference does it make," Jack asked impatiently, "so long as she kissed you!"

CHAPTER FOUR: The Search Continued

I.

ROGER had further opportunities to ponder that question during the week that followed. On long drives through moonlit landscapes, beside river and lake, there was a beautiful golden-haired girl beside him to be kissed. And more than once he had that sensation of a divided identity, helped perhaps by the things he had been drinking. There was a Roger Leland who was wholly occupied with the pleasure of kissing a pretty girl; and there was another Roger Leland, apart, detached, indifferent to the mere obvious excitement of this pastime, speculating curiously at something obscurely implicit in it, trying to guess at its secret meaning. "Why are they kissing?"

Could any question be more ridiculous? And yet it persisted. What did they seek in this blind passionate contact of flesh with flesh, what was the significance of these kisses? From beside them where Jack sat with Pansy on his lap there came a sound of laughter quickly smothered, and to the aloof part of Roger's dual mind would come the thought of thousands of boys and girls this summer night in the moonlight and the shadows, kissing, kissing. And the plain answer to his question came—because they are boy and girl, because they are together.

But, no; it was not so simple as that. For Roger Leland these kisses were part of a tormenting search for happiness in which they gave from moment to moment the promise of triumph, of rest, of peace. Vain promise, the aloof part of Roger's mind suspected. But even so these kisses had their significance; their history was the history of Roger Leland's life. And so doubtless with the million kisses of this summer night! It was because life hurt us, tormented us, that we found this

brief respite from struggle so beautiful. But what was the secret meaning of this moment to the girl who now, in the illusory triumph of a kiss, rested in Roger Leland's arms?

It held for her, he thought, the promise of some deeper forgetfulness. It wasn't that, to him. He still remembered, even at such a moment, what it was he sought, the careless companionship, the frank ecstasy, the untroubled joy of which he had dreamed. Would he ever find this in his companionship with Cecile?

In the intervals between their kisses, and when he and Jack were not amusing themselves with some crazy argument about life or philosophy or literature, Cecile bored him. He had never known that kisses were not incompatible with boredom. And yet he couldn't blame her; he blamed himself; and sometimes he blamed the girl who had sent him out on this phantom chase—Sally. Her image kept floating before his mind, dim, fantastic, unreal. Had such a girl ever really existed? Or had he imagined her?

He looked about him at the others among whom they mingled at the play-places, the dancers, drinkers, spooners, gigglers. Pagan revelers? No—the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Association on a spree!

Drinking made him only more critical. For him no rosy veil ever descended over the silly or maudlin scene. In whatever ostensibly intimate sharing of these alleged revels, some part of his mind remained apart, scornful and curious. He noted, as from a distance, the effort to drum up excitement, by music, drinking, dancing, loud talk and loud laughter, sheer mechanical noise; it was an artificial excitement, not the exuberance of a mood; it was a means to an end, a means of escape.

He wondered at first if it were an effort to escape from a boredom like his own. But that was not quite the secret of it. He suspected these youths and girls of being all oppressed with something—with fear, perhaps. They were not playing, they were working, working hard to throw off that burden for a moment, to leave it behind, to forget it. But it was so much a part of their very selves that only by some outside help, by the aid of drums, gongs, violins, whisky and beer, the rush of speed, an atmosphere of other people's excitement and other

people's noise, could they hope to attain the blessed relief of forgetfulness. They were seeking a supreme moment of intoxication in which they could be their natural selves.

2.

It was a week of phantasmagoria—of flights through the night in starlight and storm, of cafés and dance-halls, of music and whisky and kisses. The end came on Saturday night. After an evening of drinking and dancing, the party drove out to Rosetta on Lake Minnewinga. A sudden shower drenched them on the way; they stopped at a crowded roadhouse, ensconced themselves comfortably in a suite of upstairs rooms, and began to drink heavily. Jack was going away to visit his college friend next week; it was the end of Roger's vacation; and Pansy declared mysteriously that it was going to be her last party, ever. They drank many highballs as a fitting celebration of all these sad finalities; Jack recited poetry, Pansy giggled, Cecile cried.

Roger went to the window and looked out. The clouds had gone from the sky, the stars were brilliantly clear. For an instant he forgot where he was, his mind lost among those vast star-spaces. Then he heard Jack singing, "And another little drink won't do us any harm!" Roger, looking into the window, moved aside a little, and like a dim strange dream he saw reflected in the pane the scene behind him—the room, with its blazing electric chandelier, a dresser with a tray on it, the shapes of bottles, siphons, glasses, a white-counterpaned bed, all oddly distorted, as though painted by an insane artist; and, with the same queer distortion, the figures of a youth and two girls; one of the girls was sitting on the youth's lap, with her arms about his neck; the other girl was drinking from a glass. Then the picture changed; the youth picked up the girl and carried her across the room. There was a sound of a little scream that turned into giggles; the sound of a door closing. The other girl in the picture put down her glass, lifted it again, drank quickly, set down the glass, and stood still, waiting.

Roger turned and faced Cecile.

She stood there looking at him with frightened eyes.

"Well?" he said gravely.

The word seemed to break for her some spell of dumb helplessness. She took a step backward, looked around her, and cried out: "Oh, I want to go home!" Then pleadingly, "Will you take me home, Roger?"

The situation still seemed unreal to him. He was dizzy, and he tried to think. Why was she asking to be taken home? She was frightened. He felt sorry for her. She had drunk hard, trying to forget, and hadn't succeeded. That was his fault; he ought to beg her to stay, tell her that he loved her. But he couldn't. Because he was sorry for her.

Her eyes sought his with anxious appeal.

"Put on your things," he said.

"You aren't mad at me, are you, Roger?" she asked appeasingly.

"No," he said. "Why should I be angry at you?"

But it wasn't true. He was angry.

She came over to him uncertainly, and leaned on his arm. "I can't go home this way," she said. And then, "I told mother I was going to stay with Nettie to-night. . . ."

He remembered her kisses and the promise of her kisses. He remembered her as he had first seen her, a creature of magnificent sane health, of golden strength and beauty. He wanted her to be *that* girl—not this one.

"Where shall I take you?" he asked coldly.

Instead of replying in words, she pressed her lips against his, and clung to him in a hot trembling kiss, her body shaken as with an agony of despair, her arms clasping him in a desperate embrace. In that shuddering kiss she seemed to have found the blessed drunkenness she sought, and her eyes said to him pathetically, pitifully: *Now—while the spell lasts—now!*

"Do you want to stay?" he asked harshly.

In a strangled voice she said, "Oh, I don't—care!" and went limp against his shoulder.

3.

To find himself with a drunken girl in his arms in a road-house bedroom was not quite Roger's idea of beauty and happiness. He wished that they were somewhere out of this ugly

civilization, in the woods, or on the shore of the lake, under the trees or the stars. He wished that they were not both drunk. He wished that her name wasn't Cecile. He wished that they were not still, for all their week of play together, utter strangers to each other. But so it was. . . .

He lifted the burden in his arms, laid it on the white-counterpaned bed, and stood there looking down at it. He felt like a visitor from another planet, or a traveler come back by way of the fourth dimension from some utopia of the future. He looked at Cecile as if he had never seen her. He noted a pair of tight high-heeled pink pumps over which the flesh bulged alarmingly in front; those were feet, doubtless—they did not look like feet, but they must be; there must be toes, incredibly compressed within that tiny triangle of pink cloth. He stooped, pulled off one pump, held it in his hand, looking at its fantastic high curved heel and tiny toe; then with a grimace he flung it viciously into a corner, and considered the bundle that lay before him. It was enclosed in a loose husk of white cloth with pink flowers sprinkled all over it; sprigged dimity, it was called; there was a flounce at one end, a ruffle at the other, and about the middle a broad sash of pink ribbon. It seemed to be fastened in the back; and with much difficulty he commenced to undo a great number of hooks and eyes. In attempting to untie the sash he came unexpectedly upon a pin, and pricked his finger; he stopped, cursed, and then resumed his task, cautiously. Inside these wrappings there was presumably a girl; with infinite care and patience he removed those layers of flounces and ruffles and ribbons; only to find underneath still more layers of cloth; and these being in turn removed, there was revealed a strange contrivance, such as Roger had seen in shop-windows, but which was none the less a disconcerting surprise to him at this moment. It was a corset.

Roger stepped back and lighted a cigarette, utterly discouraged. Cecile was still sunk in peaceful drunken slumber. Her golden hair was arranged about her head in a multitude of tiny puffs and curls—an elaborate coiffure that seemed in its inhuman artifice to match the rest of her present aspect—the absurd corset, the pink stockings ingeniously harnessed to it, and the preposterous white bifurcations of ruffles and lace that

completed her costume. A nymph of 1904, A. D.,—and a faun of the same period, contemplating her as she lay asleep.

Roger began to laugh; and Cecile awoke.

"I was asleep," she murmured. And then, "What's so funny?"

"Me," said Roger, "—and modern civilization."

4.

At some time during the night Jack told him the story of his life. Roger did not quite know when this happened—afterward it seemed a thing detached from all the rest of the fantastic nightmare. Jack's story seemed to take a long time. Of it all, Roger was able to remember only two things—that Jack was the son of a clergyman in a little up-state town, and that he had had an unhappy love-affair with a girl back home. What else he said Roger perhaps did not even hear, being occupied with a queer memory of his own. A memory of something that had happened to him back in Plainsburg. . . .

He had put it thoroughly out of his mind. It had seemed as though it had never happened. And after all, it was so slight a thing that it had been easy enough to forget. It was about a Plainsburg girl, Banker Prout's daughter—Millie, her name was; she had a tangle of brown curls about her head, and rich, pouting, discontented lips. She seemed in some way unlike the other Plainsburg girls, and Roger had been both attracted to her and afraid of her; at school he had tried to avoid her; but once, that last spring in Plainsburg, they met by accident one evening, and walked together for an hour by the light of a moon that hung low in the sky. It seemed that she understood him as he was, and liked him for what he was. He talked—said things he would not have ventured to say to any other girl, about what he thought and dreamed; and she, walking by his side and looking up at him with breathlessly parted lips and hair that was a tangled moonlit enchantment, acquiesced utterly in all his wild talk, agreed with everything he said. Then he took her home, and at the front gate she told him, "It's too late to ask you in now, I'm afraid, but won't you come and see me some evening—soon?" And he walked away with a picture in his mind of himself calling on Banker Prout's

daughter, sitting in Banker Prout's parlor, being considered by Banker Prout as a prospective son-in-law; saw himself working on at Uncle Abner's store, saving his wages to buy a diamond engagement ring to put on Millie Prout's finger; saw himself married to her, and settling down in one of those little houses in Plainsburg, a house with a tiny lawn in front and lace curtains in the windows, in the midst of that vast sea of wheat and corn; and this vision afflicted him with a kind of horror. He felt as though he had escaped from a trap. Millie didn't want him as he was—and even if she did, it was her business to change him, make him into a creditable suitor, a satisfactory son-in-law for Banker Prout. And this, he told himself, was what would happen to him if he stayed in Plainsburg. He would become a married man like other married men of Plainsburg, he would have a wife that would be like all Plainsburg wives. No! he wouldn't go to see Banker Prout's daughter. He would find some way to escape from Plainsburg. . . .

Or had he escaped from Plainsburg already? He thought he had, but perhaps it was only a dream. He couldn't be sure.

Had he won the scholarship? He tried to remember. He broke into the story of Jack's life, asking abruptly, "Jack—Jack—where are we? Is this Plainsburg?"

"Sit down, you fool! You're drunk! Listen. What was I saying? Oh, yes—and then I told her, 'Dorothy,' I said, 'you'll be sorry for this some day. You'll be sorry for this!'"

Dorothy? Who was Dorothy? Her name was Pansy. Or was it Cecile? No, Cecile was another girl he had known somewhere else. He remembered looking all over the room for a pump she had lost, and finding it in a corner. He remembered her letting down her hair and saying, "I don't want you to think, Roger—" and he asked what it was she didn't want him to think. "That I'm the kind of a girl—" "What kind of girl are you, Cecile?" "I've always tried to be a good girl!"

Now he remembered. He had said something that had made her cry. She was always crying. She said he was perfectly hateful. He said something about a girl having to be drunk before she could be human. "Don't talk like that!" she begged. "Be nice to me!"

Roger wondered at himself. Why couldn't he have been nice to her? With her hair down, and in spite of her tears and drunkenness, or perhaps because of them, she had a kind of wild magnificence. But that very appearance angered him, it was so utterly contradicted by her pathos. He could only feel a queer uncomfortable pity for her. And she might have been glorious. Why did she have to remind him that she wasn't a dryad, simply a girl who had drunk too much to be able to resist her own impulses, giving only a pathetic starved sensuality to appease his starved sensuality, offering nothing to an imagination starved for the beauty and joy of freedom—"Why, Cecile?" "But, Roger dear, I don't want you to think that I am the kind of—" He had stopped that pitiful absurd iteration with an exasperated kiss.

Jack was talking on, while Roger remembered. "I'm a fool," said Roger to himself. "Life isn't as bad as I think it is; and if I keep on finding it so, it is because I want to find it so! I am the child of Plainsburg, after all. Cecile was frightened and ashamed; and so was I! That was why our adventure was so ridiculous. The pagan gods would have laughed to see us! And I myself am to blame, not that poor, bewildered girl!"

So he reproached himself, while Jack's story rambled on; and then his thoughts grew less clear, and he fell again under the hallucination that he was in Plainsburg, married to a Plainsburg wife with an absurd name that he could not remember.

"Jack—tell me, is this Plainsburg?" he demanded.

"This is Stumble Inn," said Jack, and went on with his story.

5.

"Do you realize that we are still total strangers to each other? I don't understand you at all, Cecile! And you don't understand me. I laugh—and you don't know what I'm laughing about. You cry—and don't know what you are crying about. We don't understand each other. We can only laugh, and cry—and kiss."

"Then kiss me, Roger!"

"Why do you cry, Cecile?"

"Oh, Roger, why do you ask that? I don't want to talk about it—now. Let's just be happy."

But, after a sick fit of nausea and weeping, she told him. . . . "We were going to be married, and so—well, I didn't think it was really wrong. But he drank—and I used to think drinking was terrible—and we quarreled. You see, I wanted Phil to save his money, so we could be married. He lost his job because he drank, and our marriage kept being put off and put off, till it seemed as if we never would be married. It hurt my pride. I thought, maybe *that's* all he wants me for! And so we quarreled. And I sent him away. I thought if he really loved me he would come back and marry me. He went away on the train, to get a job in Chicago. And there was a wreck. And he was killed. It just seemed to me as if I had killed him. If I hadn't sent him away, he wouldn't have been killed. After that, I didn't want to have anything to do with men, for a long time. And then I tried to fall in love, and I couldn't. It didn't seem as if I could care enough for any other man. And then I got to know Nettie and Nettie took me around with her, and I started to drinking—and Nettie told me I was a fool not to have a good time. And so—! But things would keep happening—to remind me. You know that night when we first met and I cried and said I didn't want to dance? The orchestra was playing a piece that Phil and I used to dance to—Not Because Your Hair Is Curly, Not Because Your Eyes Are Blue. It was a favorite tune of his; he used to whistle it all the time. That was why I cried."

"What did Phil look like?" Roger asked.

"A good deal like you," she said simply. "You remind me of Phil in a lot of ways. I guess that was why I liked you, right from the start. He had black hair like yours, and he was sort of quiet, unless he'd been drinking. Nettie said I ought to try and forget him. And I did want to have a little fun! And when you kissed me like that—"

There came a burst of merriment from the other room, and then a knocking at the door. "Oh, Cecile, can we come in?" called Pansy's voice.

"Sure!" said Cecile, drying her tears, and smiling.

6.

The door opened, and silhouetted against the light stood Jack, wrapped in a sheet as in a toga, and Pansy in a flimsy undergarment. Pansy giggled. "You cert'n'y look lovely with your golden hair spread out over your pillow like that!" she said.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said Jack. "We will now, with your kind permission, have a poetry reading. The poet Jack Milton will read his latest immortal work."

Pansy sat down on the bed. "He's just written it," she said to Roger. "He's been reading it to me, and I tell him it's *wonderful* to be able to write a poem like that, but he says I don't appreciate it. He wants you to hear it!"

"My poem," said Jack, "is entitled *Paradise Lost*. But don't go and get it mixed up with that other fellow's poem. This is a good poem. Listen!"

For years afterward, Roger kept a yellowed piece of hotel stationery, the original manuscript of that drunken undergraduate poem—to prove to himself that it really existed. . . . Standing there, with one hand clutching his toga, the other holding the manuscript, Jack declaimed:

*"Dorothy darling, through years that roll,
I thank whatever gods may be
That my unconquerable soul
Winds somewhere safe to sea!"*

*"Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,
Dorothy darling, my long-lost love,
The fugitive dream and the faded flower
And all the bitterness thereof?"*

*"Your eyes that were pure as the eyes of doves
With tears were vainly blurred,
For each woman kills the thing she loves,
By each man let this be heard!"*

*"No thorns go as deep as the rose's,
Sweet, I blame you not, the fault was mine,
And the curtain rising now discloses
The cypress-slender Minister of Wine!"*

*"The Moving Finger writes, my dear,
Of the hounds of spring and the pulse of passion,
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
I have been faithful to thee, Dorothy, in my fashion!"*

"How's that, old man? You can appreciate good poetry. That's what I like about you, Roger, you've got imagination. You and I—we've both got imagination, we're not like these tough guys, we're lovers of beauty. Do you hear that, Goldilocks? Beauty and romance! Out of the wreck of old hopes, we create something—something or other. Out of the wreck—"

"Oh, hell, she's crying again!" said Pansy. "Come on, girlie, cut it out! This isn't a funeral, you know."

There was a wilder burst of sobbing from Cecile.

"Trouble is," said Jack, "you don't know how to comfort a girl, Roger. Best way is to recite poetry to 'em—they go right to sleep! Goldilocks, shall Uncle Jack say poetry to you?"

"Yes," came the answer faintly.

"That's right. I'll say nice poetry to pretty Goldilocks." He sat down beside her, took her hand, and commenced to recite:

"The fountains mingle with the river—"

"Let's leave them to themselves," said Pansy. Roger followed her into the next room.

7.

She closed the door, and lifted herself on tiptoe to be kissed.

"Pansy," said Roger, querulously, "do I remind you of some dead lover?"

"Cecile's the limit, isn't she?" said Pansy cheerfully.

"I do not like the idea of allowing dead people to intrude into the concerns of the living," he persisted sullenly.

"Well," laughed Pansy, "we're not dead yet!" She snuggled herself against him.

"I wonder," he went on, speaking his thought aloud, "if there is something sad and serious, something terrible and ugly,

hidden in every kiss—the skeleton in the closet. Have *you* a tragic secret, Pansy?”

She put her head on one side, smiling. “Do I look that way?” she asked.

“No,” he conceded reluctantly, “you don’t. You look—like a pagan. Are you by any chance a pagan, Pansy?”

“What’s that?”

“A heathen,” he said. “A godless heathen who doesn’t know the difference between good and evil.”

Pansy drew herself away, and looked, so far as possible under the circumstances, prim. “I go to church,” she said. And then, with a frown, “But I wish you wouldn’t talk about such things, why do you have to go and try to spoil the party?” She sat down on the bed and looked dolefully at the floor.

“I’m sorry,” Roger exclaimed contritely. “What have I said?”

“Oh, well,” Pansy replied with sudden cheerfulness, “it’s all right. You see, I was going to church in the morning with a fellow. And now I’ll have a headache, and not be able to go.”

He looked at her in surprise. “Shall you regret that so very much, Pansy?” he asked.

“Well—I’ll have to do some explaining. I might as well tell you. I’m engaged.” She said this in a confidential tone, with an appealing glance at Roger out of those violet eyes. “So—you see!” she added.

Suddenly dizzy, he sat down beside her. His mind still seemed all right. “Tell me about it,” he said.

She drew her feet up under her and twisted about to face him. She looked extraordinarily like a little girl who is going to explain some childish prank about which she is half proud and half worried. She plucked with her tiny fingers at the lacy frill of her flimsy garment. “Well,” she said, “I thought it was about time I settled down. So I got engaged to Albert.”

“Who is Albert?” Yes, his mind was quite clear.

“He’s an expert accountant. The way we met was this. I had a check to cash for my mother at the bank, and I went to the Ladies’ department, and got into the president’s office by mistake—and he was there, talking to the president. We looked at each other—well, I didn’t particularly notice him,

to tell the truth. But he did me. And what do you think? He found out from the cashier—he told me afterward—what my name was. I'd been kidding with the cashier, and happened to tell him what store I worked at—so Albert found that out, too. And that very day when I quit work, there he was at the door, looking for me. At first I didn't want to let him take me home—and then I said, 'All right.' And that was how it started."

"And now you're engaged."

"Yes. And I promised my folks I wouldn't go out any more."

"Do they know—?"

"Oh, they know as much as is good for them. They knew I used to go out and get drunk sometimes—"

"And Albert—?"

"Albert doesn't know—of course not! He'd have a fit if he ever found out!"

"What sort of a person is Albert?"

"He's a very nice fellow. He's older than I am, of course, but he's not so very old. And he makes quite a lot of money. He'll give me a good home. He's a quiet sort of fellow. I heard at the bank, the cashier was kidding me about him afterward, he used to be an awful rounder; but you certainly wouldn't think it of him now! He's settled down, and wants a home. I guess that's the best kind to marry."

"I see," said Roger. "You both have your fling first—then you settle down."

"Well," she said, looking up at him out of wide, dark eyes, "people ought to take marriage seriously, *I* think. Don't you?"

"But if marriage is so terribly serious, why does anybody get married?"

"Oh," she said, "a girl has to get married—some time. And I'm twenty-one."

"So you got engaged to a man you don't really like—"

"I like him well enough. And he's perfectly crazy about me. He'll treat me right. We're going to live in Marion Park. I think that's the nicest place to live, don't you? We'll have a brick house with a veranda, and a tiled bathroom. And I'll be a good wife to him, I really will." She plucked nervously at the lacy frill. I suppose you think because—well, I know I

really oughtn't to do this way, now I'm engaged, but you see Albert went away on his vacation, and there was Cecile, driving me crazy with talking about—you know—and I thought it would be good for her to have a little fun. Of course, I didn't think it would end this way."

"Didn't you really?"

"Oh, I'm no fool. I know what the fellows are after. And that's all right, it's up to the girl to look out for herself." She straightened her little shoulders and tilted her chin beligerently. "I can take care of myself, drunk or sober!" Her pose relaxed again, wearily. "But to-night—well, I thought, Albert's coming back to-morrow, and it's my last chance! And I did want one more good time," she concluded on a mournful note.

"You couldn't go out for a good time like this with Albert?"

She laughed. "That *would* be a bright thing to do! No—there was where Cecile made her big mistake." She spoke now with a confident didacticism, as though uttering the maxims of a wisdom learned by womankind long ago and handed down through the ages. "Have your fun with the fellows if you want to—but don't let on to the man you're going to tie up with. It certainly does—not—pay. A gentleman friend is one thing, and a steady is another. They're entirely different propositions. If you want a man to marry you, you've got to make him learn to respect you. But—what people don't know don't hurt them any!"

She was silent, looking away with a troubled expression.

"What are you thinking about, Pansy?"

"I was thinking how I'm going to explain my hangover in the morning, when Albert pikes over to take me to church. Oh, well, what's the diff'? We might as well have another little drink." She leaned over to the tray on a chair beside the bed, mixed and handed him a highball, and made one for herself. "Cheer up," she said, sipping it, "the worst is yet to come! Well, what are *you* so solemn about?"

"I was thinking," he answered, "that what you say is true. You *will* be a good wife, I'm sure of it. And a good mother—"

"If Albert wants children," she said demurely.

"You'll bring up your sons to be just like Albert. And

your daughters—what's your idea of the way to bring up daughters, Pansy?"

"I hope," she said gravely, "I'll do what's right by them."

"Of course you will! You'll send them to church to learn about the immortality of the soul. By the way, Pansy, what do you do with your immortal soul?"

"What are you, a Sunday school teacher?" she asked sulkily.

"I am a sociological investigator, Pansy," he answered, gulping down his highball. "I am studying the life of pleasure as it is lived in Christian communities. So answer my questions! What do you do with your immortal soul when you go out for a good time?"

He caught sight, in a tilted mirror opposite, of a disheveled youth with black hair that fell dankly over a shiny forehead, mouth straight and grim, black eyes brooding, sitting with a half-filled glass in his hand, beside a laughing, puzzled, half-naked girl on a tousled bed. Was that himself? It was a ridiculous spectacle—but not more so than the rest of life, it seemed to him.

He emptied his glass, and resumed his argument. "Your immortal soul—you can't dance with *it*, you know. Only with your mortal body—your mortal senses, mortal wits, mortal imagination—"

"What in the world are you talking about?" asked the girl beside him.

"You, Pansy! you!" He turned to her. "One wouldn't think, seeing you now, that you were encumbered by an immortal soul. You seem to be a creature of this earth. And what earthly good is an immortal soul? It can't dance, it can't drink, it can't kiss." He had the feeling that he was repeating himself. "All it can do is go to heaven. It's utterly useless to you—at such times as these. But what do you do with it? Do you leave it at home? And when you go back after it, does it ask you disagreeable questions about what you've been doing?"

"I didn't come here to be preached at!" she said defiantly.

"Have I offended you?" he asked, in surprise.

"Well, I don't like to have you infer that I—" she began, with an attempt at dignified rebuke.

"I infer nothing, Pansy; I speak out the brutal truth. Listen, Pansy, and hear the worst I can say about you. You are the perfect feminine flower of modern civilization!"

"Are you trying to kid me, or what?"

"I am very much in earnest. What could any reasonable man ask of a girl that you aren't ready to give?"

Her violet eyes opened wider. "You certainly do like to talk when you get started," she said.

"You have the recipe for happiness," he continued.

"What's that?" she asked.

"Adapting yourself to circumstances," he said. "In other words, being satisfied with what you can get."

"Oh, well!" she said, and leaned a naked shoulder against him. "It's all right—why not? We've only one life to live!"

"True," he said, and put his arm around her. "Very true!" And then he suddenly drew away and looked at her with drunken suspicion. "But do you really believe it?" His glass fell to the floor and rolled away. He went after it, picked it up and set it on the dresser. "You don't believe what the preacher tells you about the life to come?" he continued, standing there. "You aren't worried about your immortal soul?"

"It's none of your business," she said in a high-pitched voice, "about my soul!"

And suddenly she threw her glass at him. It missed his head, struck and shattered the mirror on the dresser, and a piece of flying glass touched Roger's cheek. Pansy leaped to her feet and began to scream shrilly. Roger put his hand to his cheek, looked at it, and saw a little trickle of blood across the fingers.

There was an exclamation from the other room, and the door opened, and Jack stood there. "What are you two fighting about?" he asked severely.

"We're not fighting," said Roger, "we're having a little theological discussion! Jack, *you* are a minister's son—you can settle this dispute for us. Isn't it true that a good Christian must believe in hell?"

Jack wavered in the door, and said solemnly, "Yes—and you're *both* going there. You—and you—" He pointed to them both in turn.

Pansy was gathering up her things. "I was never so in-

sulted in my life!" she cried, and turned bitterly upon Roger. "You're a nice one! I wish you were in hell now!"

"I believe I am," he said, with sudden drunken conviction. "*This* is hell, and we are all in it!"

Jack's face turned a greenish white, and he lurched into a chair. "Gosh, I'm sick!" he said. And then, grasping at Roger's arm he demanded. "Is that true, Roger? It isn't true, is it? Am I in hell, too?"

"Cecile, let's get out of this!" Pansy called, rushing past them with an armful of her clothing.

"Don't leave me!" Jack moaned. "I'm sick. I'm sick."

He was still sick, and pleading with Roger not to leave him, when the girls were ready to go. "Get some one to drive you home," said Roger, and clumsily tried to put a bill into Pansy's hand. Cecile would not look at him. Pansy threw the money on the floor with a dramatic gesture.

"Keep it!" she said angrily. "What do you think we are?" She started to go, then turned back and looked scornfully at Roger. "I thought—that you were a gentleman!" she said. "Come on, Cecile!" And they swept from the room.

A little later, Jack, kneeling on the bedroom floor, was trying to remember his childhood prayers. Roger rang for a waiter, who in answer to his appeal brought a skillfully concocted drink that reduced the poor wretch first to nausea and then to sleep.

On the floor of the other room Roger found a piece of hotel stationery with Jack's poem written on it. He decided to keep it as a souvenir. He was quite sober now.

8.

Dawn was breaking palely. Jack was snoring. Roger had settled the hotel-bill, including the cost of the broken mirror, had a bath, and the clerk had provided some court-plaster for the cut cheek. He needed a shave, and some sleep. Monday he would go back to the store, his vacation over. Meanwhile he waited for Jack to wake up; he couldn't go away and leave Jack. Strange, that of all that week's adventure, only this remained—an absurd loyalty to his drunken friend.

CHAPTER FIVE: The End of the Search

I.

THE announcement board of the Second Methodist church stood in the full glare of the arc-light on the corner. In white letters on a black ground it declared that Dr. Deckerman would preach next Sunday morning on "Signs of the Times," and Sunday evening on "Is Man Greater Than God?" The board also contained the information that the parsonage was next door.

Dr. Deckerman, a short heavy man with graying hair, was sitting in his study revising the first of these sermons that Wednesday evening, when there was a knock at the study door. It was Mrs. Deckerman, come to tell him that a young man named Mr. DeCoverley wanted to see him.

Dr. Deckerman spent a minute trying to remember whether he ought to remember a young Mr. DeCoverley. A stranger, he concluded, and went into the parlor.

"Mr. DeCoverley?" he asked, offering his hand.

Dr. Deckerman was a man of considerable natural acumen. At one glance he sized up his young caller as some sort of crank. The young man, having shaken hands, said abruptly:

"I want to ask you a question."

"Yes, yes—won't you sit down?" So much was due to courtesy, in any case. He drew up a chair for himself.

"Now, Mr. DeCoverley, what is it you want to ask me about?"

"There is a popular impression," said the young man, "that the Methodist church collects money with which to buy clothes for savages—savages who have not hitherto worn clothes. May I ask if that is true?"

"Are you a reporter?" the clergyman asked suspiciously. The reporter of an obscure Socialist weekly had once interviewed him on the subject of foreign missions, with results that he regretted.

"No," said the young man. "I am asking the question because I want to know. Is there such a mission?"

"Why do you want to know?" the clergyman asked.

"I would like to make a contribution to that work."

The clergyman sat looking thoughtfully at his visitor.

"You haven't answered my question," the young man reminded him.

"The Methodist church," said the clergyman with dignity, "maintains its own missions in China, and contributes largely to the work of the American Mission Board in India and Armenia. These are the chief fields of our foreign activities. We maintain schools, we teach people—adults as well as children—to read and write. In connection with some of these schools we teach useful trades. We are bringing Christian civilization to these lands. In China we oppose the barbarous custom of foot-binding. In India we oppose child-marriage. In Armenia we are able to keep many young girls out of Turkish harems. So far as clothing goes, we make no attempt to compel conformity with Western usages, except when the native customs are absurd, indecent, or harmful to the health. The Christian converts themselves do prefer in many instances to wear civilized clothing. And in Armenia, where we take care of the orphans left by Turkish massacres, we clothe them as best we can; collections of old clothing for this purpose are sometimes made by the local branches of our missionary societies. The fact has apparently given rise to the popular impression you speak of—the idea that we provide clothes for savages. It is sometimes uncharitably assumed by the ignorant that in our devotion to the foreign field we neglect the poor of our own land. But that is not—"

The young man interrupted him. "Then you don't collect money to buy pants for naked savages?"

"No!" said the clergyman sharply.

"That is too bad," said the young man. "I did want to contribute to such a fund. I'm sorry I can't. But—" he paused and considered, "perhaps there is something equally—I mean, there may be some Christian work of a similar nature?"

"Similar to buying pants for savages?" asked the clergyman.

"Yes?"

"Why, may I ask, do you want to buy pants for savages?"

"That would be a long story," said the young man.

"Then perhaps we had better not go into it," said the clergyman hastily. He thought a moment. "You have asked for information about the missionary work of the church. I will give you—"

He rose. "If you will wait here a moment, I will give you a booklet describing our various missions and their activities."

He went into his study and returned with a pamphlet. "Here," he said, "this will tell you what you wish to know better than I could."

"Thank you," said the young man, and went away.

Dr. Deckerman reported briefly on the incident to his wife. "Probably insane," he said, "in a harmless way, of course. Thinks he has money. Wants to buy pants for savages."

But later in the week, much to his surprise, he received a letter from Mr. DeCoverley, enclosing a bank-draft for a little over seven hundred dollars. The letter said that next to giving pants to naked savages, the noblest Christian work seemed to be either (1) preventing child-marriages in India by putting the girl-children to work in cotton-mills, or (2) taking girls out of Turkish harems and teaching them to run sewing-machines, as described in the pamphlet. Between these activities the writer could not decide, and he preferred to leave the matter in the hands of Dr. Deckerman. If there was some other appropriate use to which he, Dr. Deckerman, preferred to put the money, he was at liberty to do so—Mr. DeCoverley was sure it would be well and righteously spent.

This letter puzzled the clergyman a good deal; but there was the bank-draft! It was evident that there were mysteries of human nature that he did not fully understand. He confessed as much to his wife. "Crazy people sometimes do sane things," he said. And the board of trustees, to which Dr. Deckerman referred the matter at its next meeting, settled it by voting to send half the sum to the China missions, and devote the other half to buying a new piano for the Sunday school room. Miss Patterson, the pianist, had been complaining of the old one as hopeless.

This silly freak of behavior gave some satisfaction to Roger. He had to get rid of that money of Uncle Abner's. He had a feeling, which he recognized as crudely superstitious, that it had brought him bad luck. And, superstitious and foolish though it might be, that feeling demanded relief. He felt a weight off his mind when the bank-draft was despatched. He would have agreed, moreover, with Dr. Deckerman that crazy people sometimes do sane things. Absurd as it seemed, there might be some sense in turning Armenian and Hindu girls into sempstresses and factory workers; the Turkish harem and the Hindu home were probably dull places. Modern civilization, much as he himself hated it, might actually be preferable to conventional Mohammedan and Hindu life! At all events, the money was now out of his hands. He was free from any obligation which it entailed, including the fantastic obligation which he had found somehow imposed upon him by Aunt Judith's letter, of "spending it on his sins." Now he could be happy with his books again, and his dreams.

He did not, however, lapse peacefully into his old bookish habits. Those old habits had been broken, and new curiosities had been aroused. Within a week he found himself again in Rivoli Park, in front of the pheasant-farm. But, to prevent any follies, he had taken along only enough money to pay for his dinner and provide car-fare home. He watched the meetings and pairings of these boys and girls, noted again their quaint formalities and familiarities, observed their illusioned happiness. But the disdain with which he had begun to look changed minute by minute into envy. Had he then learned nothing from his experience? He knew that happiness was not to be found in these adventures; he had tried it. He had been one of these youths whom he now envied walking off, girl on arm. Seen from the inside, that companionship was vain and foolish; but from the outside, it did look like happiness.

He found himself exchanging glances with a girl. She was an odd-looking girl, strikingly handsome in her way. Roger said to himself that she looked foreign. She was pale, with smoldering black eyes, and black hair that was drawn down in two straight lines from her forehead. Her clothes, too,

were odd; she wore a close-fitting turban with a Persian design in which many colors were intermingled; her dress of wine-red silk had a high-waisted effect that suggested the fashion of another century; its simplicity charmed him. She was obviously neither a shop-girl, nor a girl from Miss Brant's school; she represented no social class that he was acquainted with; she did not seem to belong to St. Pierre at all.

He lingered, watching her; and she also lingered. Once she started to go away; but after a few steps she turned and came back, selecting a place apart from the others. She had made no pretence of looking at the pheasants; and now she looked directly at Roger, and seemed to nod a faint greeting. He went up to her.

She smiled. "Thank you for coming over," she said. "I wanted to talk to you." Her voice had a faint huskiness, and the trace of an accent which Roger could not identify except as "foreign." He had thought that her eyebrows were in some way unusual; now he saw that they were drawn as with a pencil, narrow and fine and beautifully curved. Her lips, too, were firm and clear in their outline, but they had some irregularity in contour that fascinated him. In spite of all these oddities, he felt singularly at ease with her.

"I've been wondering about you," he told her.

She smiled, a curious irregular smile. That was where he had got the impression of an irregularity in the shape of her mouth, from her smile. "And I," she said, "have been wondering about you." Her voice was cool and grave, with that faint huskiness in it, and that indefinable trace of an accent. "Who are you?" she asked.

"I am a clerk in a book-store," he told her. "My name is Roger Leland." He was glad to be speaking the truth to some one again.

"Oh!" she said. She looked at him thoughtfully. "Well, in that case—I am a vaudeville actress; my name is Rose Henderson."

Roger shook his head. "I am not well acquainted with vaudeville actresses," he said. "But you are surely not the—usual type? And your name? Rose Henderson!"

"That is my real name," she said. "My stage name is Rosika Valeska. I am billed as the world-famous Polish dancer. I

am supposed to be the illegitimate daughter of a Polish prince; I am also supposed to have been the mistress of the King of Spain. But there seems to be no reason for lying to you, so I tell you the truth. I am not Polish; I am almost everything else on my mother's side, but my father was Scotch-American, and his name was Henderson. I am not illegitimate; my parents were most respectably and unhappily married. I never—so far—have been the mistress of any king; I've never been out of the United States. This accent of mine is carefully cultivated. If you don't mind—" and her voice changed its quality in mid-sentence, "I'll drop back into United States. The rest of my sad story is that the vaudeville team I was with has gone bust, and I haven't been paid any salary for three weeks, and I owe a hotel bill. So you see why I am here."

"But why here?" asked Roger. "This is a place for shop-girls—not Polish princesses."

"So it seems. But I took a chance. It was an experiment. I'll tell you, since I'm telling you everything else. The manicure girl at my hotel knows a stenographer, who knows a girl who works in one of the big stores. And the girl who works in the store confided to the stenographer, who told the manicure girl, who told me, that she had picked up a millionaire's son here a week ago—a college boy who went around with a pocket full of hundred dollar bills! I came here looking for that idiot boy. Poor fellow, I think I could show him a better time than any of these bedraggled shop-girls! And—well, this will amuse you—I had a third-hand description of him, and I thought you were the bird!" She smiled her curious smile.

Roger smiled also, ruefully. "Well," he said, "since we're telling each other the truth, I don't mind admitting that I am—or was—that bird."

"What!" said the girl.

"Yes—I am the idiot boy you were looking for. It seems improbable enough, but it's true."

"Damn!" said the girl. "And I've given the show away. That's what I get for being honest, once in a lifetime!"

"It's all right," said Roger, "those hundred-dollar bills are

now in other and wiser pockets. I now have—" he took out his money and counted it—"one dollar and forty cents."

"One dollar and forty cents," said the girl, "is, nevertheless, one dollar and forty cents. It will stake us to—let me see—a fifty-cent Italian table d'hôte, with red-ink thrown in. And you can tell me the story. I think I've earned that! Is it a go?"

"It is a go," said Roger. "I think the story will amuse you."

"I'm sure of it," said the girl, taking his arm. "This promises to be one of the pleasantest evenings in a varied career."

He watched that strange smile as they went to the restaurant. It was a faintly lop-sided smile, sharp at one end, and with a nervous flicker at the other, the oddest smile in the world. It began at one side sharply, and seemed to flash across and end in that nervous flicker. It was a smile that might have been born of painful experience, but it had the charm of a whimsical work of art.

Over the spaghetti and the red-ink he told her the story of the vanished hundred-dollar bills. At Aunt Judith's letter she smiled that misshapen smile. "I had a grandfather just like that," she said. When Roger came to the corset episode, she laughed uncontrollably. She laughed again at Jack's poem, which he read to her from the original manuscript. But when he had concluded his story with the account of his letter to the Methodist preacher, she sighed and was silent.

"I could have used that seven hundred dollars," she said wistfully.

"I wish you had it," he told her.

"But it's a beautiful story," she said, "and I shall have to kiss you for it."

She leaned forward impulsively over the tiny table, but before their lips could meet she drew back. "No," she said, "since we're telling each other the truth, I might as well tell you that my kisses don't mean a darn thing. They never have, since I was fifteen years old and kissed a boy in the woods. He was a nice boy, and he liked to hear me recite poetry—and I got into a hellish row over him with my grandfather, and married somebody else, and ran away from home and went on the stage. I've learned to kiss quite beautifully, but as I

say it doesn't mean anything. So if you'd just as soon not—"

"I wish you would recite some poetry for *me*," said Roger. "I've never heard any one recite poetry in my life. I've heard boys and girls stumble over it in the class-room; and I've read it aloud to myself. But I've never heard it come, living, from human lips."

"You haven't? You poor darling!"

Then she started to recite. Her husky voice became a deep-toned 'cello that poured out the pure melody of Shakespeare, throbbed with the sonorous stanzas of Swinburne, and murmured the drowsy lines of Yeats. He sat silent and entranced while she recited endless fragments of verse as they came up in her memory. The waiter hovered about them. Roger paid the check. The waiter returned, and commenced noisily to pile chairs on top of tables. They looked about. The restaurant was empty, save for themselves and the waiters. They looked at the clock. It was midnight. They rose to go.

"Why aren't you a great actress?" Roger asked her wonderingly. "Instead of—"

"Instead of a cheap vaudeville dancer that masquerades as a Polish princess and gets stranded in the middle west," the girl finished for him. "It's because you and I—and that boy that I kissed in the woods, if he's still alive—are the only people in these United States that know what poetry is. Would you like to hear some more? Then come to the hotel with me."

She nodded coolly to the clerk, and he handed out her key. In her room, she went straight to her trunk and took out a little volume. She gave it to Roger to look at. "Synge," she explained. "He's an Irish poet. He's not known here at all. This is a great play. I'd like to act in it. But no chance of that!"

It was called *Deidre of the Sorrows*.

The girl threw off her hat, sat down and commenced to read the poignant speeches of the play. At the end of the first act, she asked, "Shall I go on?"

"Yes," he said quietly.

She read on. What was the magic of this strange, bitter, beautiful play? The cadence of the sentences was a queer speech-tune from Ireland, unlike any talk familiar to his ears.

The phrases revealed a new poignancy in common words. . . . *Was there ever the like of Deidre for a happy and a sleepy queen? . . . I'm asking, each day, will this day match yesterday? . . . There is no place but will be lonesome to us from this out. . . .* Her voice flowed over him, a cool plangent stream of sound. He found himself crying silently.

The girl looked up, smiled her odd smile and flung the book across the room. "Well, thank God somebody can cry over poetry," she said. "It's the only thing worth crying about! And now you'd better go home, before we spoil this." She stood up, and put her hands on his shoulders. "If I ever get to be a great actress, Roger, come and see me. I won't have forgotten this. Good-by."

He went home, drunken as he had never been on whisky or kisses.

3.

He had thought he would never, after that, go back to Rivoli Park. But he did go, there and to the other pleasure-places of White Falls and St. Pierre. And again, more than once that summer, he found himself talking to some girl; again, more than once, he pursued the illusion of a companionship that should be at once light and gracious, irresponsible and sincere, generous and self-respecting. He had adventures, of sorts. A comparative lack of money, he discovered, was no bar to such adventures; as long as a young man had evenings to waste, he could find girls with nothing better to do than help him waste them. There was a girl from Miss Brant's exclusive school up the river, met in a moment of hysterical reaction against the strict rules and the watchful care of its teachers; and oddly enough, there was later a teacher from the same institution, a girl who taught French, similarly mutinous after enforced association with the daughters of the rich. To complete the irony, there was another school-teacher, met at the state fair that fall, on her way to take charge of a country school; she was having her last fling before she went into the imprisonment of enforced association with the daughters of the poor. All three of these, the two school-teachers and the school-girl, wanted desperately a chance to smoke a

cigarette; and these cigarettes were smoked with a fine air of rebellion. All three of these young women were infinitely grateful for a companionship in which a girl could smoke a cigarette; it was a moment out of their ordinary lives, a moment to remember through many months. And, to Roger, that fact in itself made these occasions rather sad.

He wondered if youth's adventure was always tainted with this sense of desperate mutiny. He had heard that the peasant-peoples from middle and northern Europe brought with them a different attitude, one that had survived from pagan days; they were said to smile indulgently upon the pleasures of youth. It might, he conceded, have been so; but the youth of the second generation had already learned American standards of behavior. He became acquainted with a Norwegian girl, who told him quaint tales which her aunt had told her, of "night-running" in the old country. But she herself had been brought up to American manners and morals. She strove earnestly to live up to both; and what at first he took for something out of a Viking legend, something that seemed authentically primitive and noble in her passion, became presently revealed as merely her failure to adapt herself to American middle-class standards—a shameful, secret confession that she was a peasant after all.

Ignoble adventures these, and sad adventures! For the girls least of all was there the possibility of happy, fearless play, the sheer gay exuberance of health, the unconstrained and untrammelled joy of the body. They believed what they were taught. They lacked the convictions of their courage. The pagan happiness that he had seemed to glimpse in Sally didn't exist—couldn't exist.

4

He wished that he had been content to dream of such happiness, instead of seeking for it. That search, in which illusion had been perpetually reborn and perpetually slain, had been utter folly.

A mood of cynical asceticism followed.

He began to console himself with a vague neo-Oriental mysticism.

From the consoling gospels of that mystical period Roger could later remember, or half-remember, only one sentence, which had sung itself over and over in his mind for weeks. It went like this:

"Out of desire comes pride; out of pride, envy; out of envy, hate; out of hate, madness."

It seems meaningless, and not a little absurd. But it had for Roger at the time a special meaning. He congratulated himself upon having escaped in time from the fatal coil of mortal passions. He desired, he told himself, nothing.

5.

And then he found Sally again.

Roger, on first coming to White Falls, had lived in a boarding-house patronized by poor students like himself; but after finishing college, in a revulsion against his former life, and in some endeavor to dissociate himself from it, he had changed to another place—where, his fellow-boarders being clerks like himself, he would not have to look nightly across the table into pathetic student-faces. But again, after a time, he had grown discontented with his table company, and again had moved; it became a habit, a silly symbolic expression of his disgust with life. But it served to bring him into contact with all sorts of people—and presently, that fall, it brought him by accident under the same roof with Sally.

He had put her and all that she meant to him out of his mind. Was he still unwittingly seeking her? However that may be, it was at Ma Patterson's that he found her.

Ma Patterson was a fat, jocund, genially vulgar widow, not yet in her forties, who enjoyed seeing people eat; she said so, and Roger found it to be true. She had a cousin, an amiable elderly eccentric, who talked incessantly in a soft voice; Peter Patrick Hurly his name was, but he was referred to humorously by the other boarders as Pitter-Pat, or, to his face, Peter-Pat;—a frail wisp of a man, broken with rheumatism, who thought of himself as an inventor, and pottered about the house all day, mending broken furniture. The cellar of the house was full of broken odds and ends, and every goods-box, every piece of string, every broken kitchen knife was hoarded there for

future use in his "inventions." He was forever sawing old things to pieces and fastening irrelevant parts together to make some strange-looking piece of furniture of various and doubtful uses, upon which he would gravely consider taking out a patent. His great and as yet unperfected invention was a ventilator. He told Roger about it, showed him the greasy, ancient "plans," and Roger became well acquainted with him the Saturday afternoon he moved there. With Ma Patterson, too, he became quickly acquainted. She asked him if he weren't a writer, and when he confessed that he had hopes of becoming one, assured him that she could tell it to look at him. Most of her boarders, she said, were "artistic"—she liked to have that kind. Some of them were actors, members of a struggling local repertoire company; another was a woman who worked on one of the papers, and wrote poetry; and two others were cabaret-singers. She spoke of her daughter "Sara"—she gave the first *a* the broad sound of *ah*, and Roger smiled to think how she must have been coached by her daughter *not* to pronounce it as though it were spelled "Sarah" in the ordinary way. Roger had become so accustomed to thinking of Sally as "Sally" that he had altogether forgotten her last name; and it never would have occurred to him to identify her with this boarding-housekeeper's daughter. Sara, she told him, had "musical talent," and was studying at the Conservatory this fall; she had been for a while this summer the organist at Dr. Deckerman's church. Naturally enough he did not guess who she was.

And yet he was not utterly unprepared, it would seem, for the meeting. A part of his mind, not the reasonable but the dreaming part, must have had some premonition that this was she. For already this change to Ma Patterson's boarding-house had induced in him a different mood, a mood of new awakening to life. The world was interesting once more; he found Ma Patterson charming, and the prospect of meeting her artistic boarders pleased him. Through his mind, as he shaved for dinner, floated a tune of words of which he presently became conscious, with some surprise, for they weren't that familiar maxim about the fatal folly of being human; no, they were a fragment of another utterance of quite different meaning: "Laughing kisses . . ." Roger carried it on from

memory: "as untroubled and inconsequent as butterflies. . . ."

He finished shaving to that tune of words, and then went to his trunk and selected the gayest of his neckties. The dinner bell rang as he put it on. He started down the stairs.

As he reached the stair-landing, some one opened the front door, and entered. He heard the door slam, looked down, and there was Sally.

6.

Only a few months had passed since he had last seen her; a mere summer; but he felt as if it had been many years. She was still the same radiant girl he had known. He did not, at this moment, connect her with Ma Patterson, nor realize how she came to be here; he was concerned only with the fact of her real existence. She flung herself indoors and started gayly up the stairs. Roger stepped back, with suspended breath and with the odd feeling that his heart, too, had stopped beating, and watched her over the banister. He was amazed at the tremendous physical shock of her return into his life; there seemed to be a partial paralysis of all his senses; it grew dark around him, and he saw her through a haze. When she reached the landing, he stood there facing her, unable to speak or move. She, too, stood silent.

Then his powers came back; his heart seemed to pound heavily in his breast, and he breathed quickly, as though he had been holding his breath. "Sally!" he cried.

"You!" she said.

Her eyes were blue-green; he had not remembered that. They looked frightened for a moment, and then her red lips opened in that soft golden laugh of hers that he knew so well. "You!" she repeated.

Their hands met, and they were almost in one another's arms in that moment. But Ma Patterson's voice was heard calling, "Sally, is that you? Dinner's all ready!"

They clung hand in hand, and looked at each other.

Then Roger whispered, "Let's celebrate!"

"All right," she whispered back.

"Shall we go to the theater?"

"Yes!"

She seemed to become aware of her surroundings, withdrew her hands and put them to her tousled tawny hair, and said, "I'll be right down." So saying, with a smile, she passed him, going upstairs to her room. Roger went down to dinner.

He took the place assigned to him and was introduced to the actor, the actress, the newspaper woman, the cabaret-singers, the elderly lecturer. There was a vacant place at his right hand; evidently Sally was to sit beside him. Ma Patterson began to apologize for her daughter's tardiness. So—the fact became clear at last—Sally was Ma Patterson's daughter.

She was telling him about Sally. It became advisable that he should explain, before Sally came down, that he already knew her. "I just saw Sally on the stairs," he said to Ma Patterson, "and we discovered that we had met before."

"Isn't that nice!" said Ma Patterson. And then: "Was it at Dr. Deckerman's church?"

He muttered something in reply, his mind intent upon the fact that *she* had been at that old fool's church. "I'll bet," said Ma Patterson slyly, "that you were the young man she was telling me about, that used to go there to hear her play!" She smiled benevolently at Roger.

Then Sally entered, sedately, with tawny hair brushed smooth.

"Sara, Mr. Leland tells me—" her mother began.

"Yes, we already know each other," said Sally calmly. It wasn't, Roger observed, the tone of a daughter to a mother; it was a tone which calmly extinguished any claim which this woman might possibly make to kinship with herself. She was a lady speaking to an innkeeper's wife—kindly, distantly.

"We were just talking about Dr. Deckerman's—" said Ma.

Something in Sally's manner shut her mother up abruptly. Sally, having seated herself beside Roger, nodded to the others, and then obliterated them by a complete unconsciousness of their existence. They all, including her mother, seemed a little afraid of her. She had changed, Roger thought. There was an imperiousness in her manner now. A defense against a hostile world? Roger wondered at it briefly. He only knew that the outside world was very much outside, and he and Sally alone together in Arcady. He even forgot to think of

Ma Patterson as Sally's mother. Which was doubtless as Sally wished it to be.

They went to the theater, and saw in a kind of golden dream the most gorgeous of the musical shows that had yet reached the middle-west. Then they went to an outdoor lakeside place for supper and dancing; for the warm weather still lingered on in an Indian-summer October, the most delicious of all seasons. And there they began to talk about themselves. Roger seemed, in his daze, to have sense enough not to bewilder her with the unintelligible jargon of ideas; he had never for that matter supposed that she would be interested in ideas as such; why should she be? He chattered about Howard's; without knowing why, he told her that his pay had just been raised again, and that old Billings was getting so feeble that he, Roger, might expect to have to step into his shoes any day. But he told her these things lightly, as matters of no great interest. He was, at that moment, a being infinitely superior to Howard's. He might have been Apollo, discoursing to one of his fellow-immortals about how he took care of the mangy sheep of Admetus. And while he talked, he told her with his eyes that she was the loveliest of the goddesses.

Sally told him about the Conservatory, and the teachers, and her ambitions; she was going to become a great singer. He believed it.

They danced; and of this hour, as of none before it in his life, it could be said that the happiness he had always sought seemed found at last, as he held this lithe, joyous girl in his arms, and felt the music swing them off in a rapt, careless, serene embrace. It takes little to make people happy when they are not inclined to question what they have. He had no wish beyond the moment; no doubts, and no fears.

They said silly things. She praised his dancing. "I learned it," he said, laughing, "in the purlieus of vice and the sinks of iniquity, while you were being organist of the Second Methodist church."

She laughed. "What funny things you say!"

She would never, he reflected, know how funny it was!

Presently they were calling each other by their first names.

"Roger!"

"Sally!"

The rest did not seem to matter.

"Why did you leave Howard's?" he asked.

She did not answer. She drummed with her fingers on the little table to the tune the orchestra was playing, smiled at him, and said,

"Let's dance!"

They were in love. Roger didn't call it that, because he didn't know what it was. He was in a trance of happiness. And so, with whatever difference of experience and temperament there might be, was Sally. It was a trance so complete for both of them that looking into each other's eyes, touching each other's hands, and hearing each other's voices, was enough.

They came home very late that night, and not until they entered the house did they think about to-morrow. What should they do with it? There was still some golden outdoors weather to be enjoyed, and to-morrow was Sunday. "Let's make a day of it—a day in the woods," said Roger.

A fleeting frown like a troubled thought shadowed her brow, and then vanished.

"All right," she whispered.

It seemed to him that she looked up for a good-night kiss, and then shyly changed her mind; she held out her hand, pressed his, and turned away. He called her back. "Sally!"

"Yes?" She paused.

"Darling!" he said, and took her in his arms.

"Darling yourself!" she whispered, flung her arms about his neck, and kissed him; then hurriedly disengaged herself from his arms and fled upstairs.

7.

She was rather alien next morning, when they started out; but that wore off, and she proved herself a good comrade. They emerged from tramping the woods to dine and dance at one of the parks, and then wandered back into their solitudes.

They were sitting hand in hand in a nest of dry leaves, in the moonlight.

"Why didn't we get to know each other at Howard's?" she asked wistfully.

"My stupidity," said Roger. "Think how much we have missed!" And that phrase, remembered yesterday, came into his head again, and he said aloud: "*Laughing kisses . . . as inconsequent and untroubled as butterflies.*"

And so saying, he drew her close to him, and kissed her. Roger didn't know he was in love; he thought he was finding the laughing kisses he had sought so long and vainly. But Sally, though she didn't know all that these words signified, knew well enough what change had come into his mood, and held herself away for the first time. Their embrace became an unseemly scuffle. Roger laughed. So did Sally, but there was a note of panic in her laughter. "Let me go!" she pleaded. "Kiss me!" he demanded.

And then suddenly she ceased to struggle, and he kissed her—but in a moment desisted, for it was a statue he was kissing, cold and passive, with marble lips. He looked at her in the moonlight, and her eyes were full of grief.

"Sally!" he cried.

She looked away, and did not answer. Only her fingers moved, clutching and crushing a handful of dead leaves.

"Look at me!" he begged.

Instead, she turned her head so that he could only see the white curve of her cheek.

"What have I done?" he asked bewildered.

Her voice came mournfully and as if from far away. "You—don't—love—me."

"But—!" he said, and paused to realize, overwhelmingly, the fact—"but I do!"

She turned quickly and looked at him. "Do you really?" she asked, in her natural voice.

"Of course I do!" he said.

"I thought you did—and then—"

"Well, you know, *now*," he affirmed.

She laughed in her old way. "Now that it's occurred to you to mention it!" she said.

"But I never realized it until just this moment," said Roger truthfully.

She laughed again, that lovely soft laughter of hers. "You funny kid!" she said.

"But—why?" Roger asked, puzzled.

"You say such queer things. I don't know what to make of you!"

"Nor I of you!" he said. "Why did you suddenly turn to stone a moment ago?"

"We're both being silly," she told him. And then she asked: "Do you really love me?"

"I love you," he answered, taking her in his arms. "Why should you doubt it?"

"I don't know. I guess I believe you. I want to." She looked at him thoughtfully.

"Kiss me, then," he said.

"What time is it?" she interposed.

"Who cares?"

"Tell me!"

He looked at his watch. "Two o'clock."

"*That* late!"

"What of it!"

"We can't be home for another hour yet. And that's long past the time when little girls ought to be in bed. I wonder what my mother will think?"

He had forgotten that she had a mother.

"Does it matter what anybody thinks?" he asked.

"I'm afraid it does," she said gravely. Then she turned in his arms so as to look into his eyes, and said: "Roger! I wonder—do you mind if I tell my mother—that we're engaged?"

8.

There was no possibility of his misunderstanding the question. She wasn't asking him if she could give that as an excuse to her mother. She was asking him, in that round-about way, if he wanted to marry her. For an instant Roger's old illusions of Sally whirled around in his head dizzyingly, and then he steadied himself to an apprehension of the situation with which he was confronted.

He asked, not concealing his surprise: "You mean—you want us to be married?"

She looked away, and her voice became hard. "I thought," she said, "that was what *you* wanted."

"I hadn't thought of marriage at all," he confessed.

Again she was like a statue in his arms. "Then—what did you want?" she asked.

Roger considered his answer. But before he had time to formulate his philosophy of life in simple words, she reminded him, still in the same far-away voice: "You—said—you—loved—me."

"So I did," he answered. "And so I do. That does make a difference, I suppose. Well, perhaps I do want to marry you. But let me think. Give me a moment to realize what is happening! A little while ago I didn't even know I was in love—and now it's a question of marriage. I think I might be allowed to ask one thing, first, Sally; may I?"

"Ask anything you want," she said defiantly, lifting her head as if to meet—it seemed to him—some terrible accusation.

"I only want to ask—" But what did he want to ask? "Do you love *me*, Sally?"

Her pose of defiance crumpled in a swift surprise, and then she put her hands on his shoulders. "Roger, I *do* love you, I do!" she cried. "I love you, truly and forever!"

"Well," said Roger, "that's settled, then. You may announce our engagement to all and sundry. When shall we be married? I must think about getting old Billings' job, so as to support you properly."

"No," she said doubtfully, "I don't think I want to tell anybody except mother, yet. And perhaps not even her, for a while. And we needn't get married right away, Roger. There's no hurry about that!"

"Oh, isn't there?" said Roger. "Now that I'm converted to marriage, I find that I believe in it passionately. Let's get married to-morrow."

"No," she said, "there's lots of things to think about first."

"Such as what? Where to live, and all that? Let's think about them now."

"But I don't want to think about them now. I don't want to think about anything, yet, except—you."

"Darling!" he said.

They kissed each other tenderly.

"We don't have to decide anything to-night," she said. "It's

just that it's nice to know—that it's really true. And now we really *must* go home."

They kissed good-night at her door. "Is it nice to be engaged?" he asked, half mockingly.

"What a funny boy you are," she said. "Yes, of course it's nice—it's the nicest thing in the world!"

"Think of that!" he said. "The nicest thing in the world—just to be engaged!"

"To you!" she said, and slipped inside her door.

CHAPTER SIX: Sally

I.

ROGER paused, that night, between taking off one shoe and the next, sitting on the edge of his bed in that room just moved into and not yet put to rights. "She loves me," he said to himself, "and I love her. Then why not get married? It's true she isn't a nymph or dryad. I've been a fool; and now I'm over it—that's all."

His glance, thoughtfully raising itself from the carpet to fix upon nothing in particular across the room, noted there a picture, a part of the original furnishings, which he had intended to take down. He frowned. It was a picture of "a yard of puppies," very droll, infantile and helpless. He had meant to put in its place a savage design from Jugend entitled *Die Liebesjagt*. That was still packed away somewhere in his trunk, or in that large box of books which still stood unopened in the middle of the floor. He would have to build shelves. . . .

"I've been a fool," he repeated. "But that's finished." It came to his mind as a curious formless thought that in his silly search he had been trying to find *himself*. He took that formless idea up and tried to make it mean something. Had he found himself now; and this self, his real self—what was it? At all events, it was a self that didn't shy off from the idea of marriage. . . . Oh, yes, doubtless, in a sense that engagement was a "trick"—a girl's trick; he knew that; but what of it? He didn't mind being tricked into happiness.

He took off the other shoe.

What was marriage, that he should have found the idea always so hateful before? A kind of imprisonment, a pit of vulgar domesticity, from which, once fallen into it, one could hardly climb out! It seemed different now; Sally made it seem different. It meant—being with her; it meant not being lonely, because of her presence; it meant finding in her arms

a rapture of self-forgetful joy that he had never yet found.

There seemed no reason to delay their marriage. He would talk to her about it to-morrow, and persuade her to begin their new happiness at once. . . . He fell asleep upon that determination.

2.

But Sally, when they were alone together next evening, did not want to talk about marriage; she wanted to go somewhere and dance. And as they came home she asked him:

"Would you like to meet me somewhere down-town to-morrow for dinner?"

He said that of course he would. And she added that she got so tired of being watched by the whole boarding-house while she ate.

They dined next evening at the St. Pierre; he had a naïve wish to treat her to the best, and show her off. But though she looked very lovely to him in the green frock she had worn at the Conservatory, she seemed uncomfortably conscious of not being dressed up; and he, too, was ill at ease there.

The next evening they dined in a quiet chop-suey place; and this suited them both very well. Sally was once more a delightful companion. Surely there was nothing in the world more delicious than her laughter, heard across a tiny restaurant table, with her hand lightly touching his for a moment, her gray-green eyes shining as they looked away from a too deeply and intoxicatingly intimate locking of glances, her tawny hair a little disordered, and her sweet firm forearm and cool shoulder gleaming in the subdued light. They talked; they told each other the story of their lives—Sally giving hers very sketchily. Her father had been the son of a professor of Romance languages in an Eastern university; he had, as a boy, traveled all over Europe with his father; and he might have taught in college himself; but he had married young, gone into business, and failed. He had died while she was a child, leaving her mother to support the family. And from a sudden deep reluctance in her manner, Roger felt that something more tragic than his death and their poverty was being left untold. Sally went on to speak of Peter-Pat, her uncle,

whom she seemed anxious that Roger should respect. He had once sold an invention—she was rather vague about it—to a corporation, for a trifling sum, and the corporation had “made a fortune out of it.” Another corporation had infringed another patent of his, and he had lost what money he had suing for damages, without being able to get any redress. Her mother she did not speak of.

She told shyly of her own love of music. An old German violinist with long white hair had once stayed at the boarding-house; he had heard all the great opera singers in his time, and he told her that she might be a great singer some day, and not to ruin her voice with bad teachers. She mentioned the cabaret experience; one of the cabaret-singers at the boarding-house had got her the job; but she “didn’t like the atmosphere,” and quit. She spoke of Howard’s—and here they paused to discuss the question of who had first fallen in love with the other; it seemed to be a tie. Roger was surprised to find that he had stood in her eyes, from the beginning, as a gentleman! She hadn’t regarded him as a clerk—that was at most an accidental fact. Roger laughed, and assured her that he was no gentleman; but she knew better. She mentioned seeing him talk to Mrs. March: he had been talking to her, not as an employee, but as an equal. He belonged in Mrs. March’s world; and he could take his place there any time he wanted to. “Yes, really, Roger!”

There was an excursus, in which she told him the story of Mrs. March . . . a poor girl who had worked her way through Scott college by washing dishes. But she had been somebody, just the same, and when Mr. Bradford March, the youngest son of a family that owned the biggest grain-elevators in St. Pierre, saw her, he fell in love with her, and they were married. They lived in Scott Park, near the college, and Mr. March was on the board of regents. Mrs. March was a wonderful woman. . . . Roger agreed to this, and told Sally of his latest conversations with her at the store. . . .

He was touched to find that Sally’s ideals were not crudely concerned with mere wealth; and her respect for Mrs. March seemed to give some meaning to her quaint aristocratic ideals. If that was the kind of gentility to which she aspired, he could sympathize with her.

3.

He had asked her to sing for him, and she had put it off. "You know, I'm just beginning. You wouldn't be interested in my exercises," she protested. She was just beginning to understand musical "theory," she said. She was also for the first time hearing a great deal of good music. She spent many of her afternoons at the concerts, where in addition to the pleasure of good music she had the privilege of an occasional introduction to some nice people. . . .

At last, at his urging, she consented to sing for him. She invited him, one evening, along with Miss Florent, one of the cabaret-singers, to her room. This room, which he had never been in before, was large and comfortable, not cluttered up with furniture; a grand piano in the corner, candles for illumination, a couch with colored pillows, a few chairs; the wall-paper was of a uniform gray tint, and there was one picture, a framed photograph of Geraldine Farrar. Roger was rather surprised at the simplicity and soundness of her taste. And he began, suddenly anxious, to wonder what her singing would be like. He had never realized before that he was doubtful of her in this respect. But the occasion began to assume the quality of a test.

First Miss Florent sang a popular sentimental song; it was, Roger thought, quite terrible, but he managed to dissemble his discomfort and applaud. Then Sally, accompanying herself, sang an old English ballad. When she announced it, Roger breathed with relief. And she began to sing.

Roger told himself that he knew nothing about music, and that he had no right to criticize. But he could not help being disappointed. She sang the simple lines in a formal operatic manner, with a forced prolongation of the vowels and an artificial sustaining of all the high notes, so that its charming melody was disguised and its story made unintelligible. He had never heard a ballad sung as it should be sung; but this, he knew, was wrong. Yet it was doubtless the way she was being taught to sing at the conservatory. What were ballads to her teachers? They were engaged in turning out "singers."

It wasn't her fault.

What though her singing was immature, painstaking and

emotionally forced and meaningless? That was doubtless to be expected. . . . But he thought of the strange girl who had read poetry to him one night. That was real.

Oh, perhaps it was true that Sally wasn't an artist. Perhaps it was true she was studying music, not because of any driving impulse, but rather because of a desire to escape from the ugliness of her surroundings. *He* had wanted to escape from Plainsburg! They were alike in that. She was going to the Conservatory, as he had gone to Herald—to find something different. He wasn't, it suddenly struck him, an artist himself. He had dreamed of becoming a writer, as she had dreamed of becoming a singer. But it took something harder, some more ruthless and single-minded determination than either of them possessed, to succeed in the arts. . . .

He thought again—while Sally finished her song—of his writing; if it had amounted to anything, that might have been a reason for not marrying. Art was a jealous mistress. His writing had been what Sally's singing was: an effort to escape from the commonplace. But the commonplace, in its most vital aspect, had been waiting for them around the corner. The commonplace had its own beauty, after all! They needn't make themselves miserable, trying to write or sing; they could be happy together. . . .

She concluded her song, Roger patted his hands together softly, and Miss Florent tactfully left them. Sally came over and sat beside him on the couch, nestling her tawny head on his shoulder.

"Sally," he said to her, "when shall we be married?"

She frowned.

She didn't want to talk about that. . . .

She seemed reluctant to consider it as an immediate and practical matter. She was apparently content to dream of it as a far-off and beautiful thing. . . . She saw them, in her dreams, married and happy—a little older, perhaps five years older, with Roger established somehow as a personage, and herself by that time fitted to be the wife of a personage; they had friends, of the right sort, nice people, such people as one was sometimes introduced to at concerts, such people as sometimes, once in a great while, condescended to come to the musical parties she went to in the evenings, such people even as

Mrs. March; they would live in a house of the right kind, and give dinners there, and entertain these friends. . . . But Roger insisted on talking about marriage as something of to-day, obvious and practical. He was candid about his finances. They would have to begin modestly, in a tiny house in one of the less desirable suburbs. When old Billings died or got fired, they could begin to plan for the kind of house they really wanted to live in. . . . He was talking about marriage like a department-store clerk; or rather, as a department-store clerk should talk;—doubtless department-store clerks are at once more vague and more romantic in their plans, when they talk with their fiancées!

Sally asked, "Can't we wait a little?"

"Why?" he demanded.

"I want to go on with my music. . . ."

"But—" He stopped; it would be too cruel to ask, "why go on with it?" Yet obviously she was destined for marriage, not for the arts. She would play the piano to her husband, and sing to him in the evenings, sometimes; and she would think that she had given up a career for his sake. That was all right; let her think so; only let her surrender to the inevitable—as he was surrendering. . . . It did not occur to him that he was jealous of an ambition more robust than his own. If he couldn't be an artist, how dared she hope to be!

After a pause, he went on: "You can keep on with your music, after we're married—if you want to."

He knew well enough that marriage and a career were in her mind two separate things. Forced to consider their incompatibility, she said, "I suppose that would be rather silly—wouldn't it?" and sighed.

She was giving up, without a word, without a protest, her ambition. Not so, doubtless, are real ambitions given up; yet it must have hurt to have this dream, however false, swept aside so casually by her lover. . . .

Solidly back of that frail ambition was the wish to be "somebody," to be respected, and to deserve respect. There was always at the back of her mind the history of the ill-matched marriage of which she was the child, for which she had been the excuse; her mother had been nineteen when she married Gerald Patterson; the mother of his unborn child, she

had become his wife—but she had never been able to take her place beside him in the world in which he belonged. They had begun a new life, outside that world, in the ranks of poverty and misery; and Gerald Patterson's life had been spoiled. . . . Sally couldn't tell her lover that; she couldn't speak of it, because it would have meant telling about her mother's folly; she didn't even consciously think of it, because it brought up the too-painful memory of the suicide with which her father had finally confessed his failure. . . . Indeed, she was hardly aware of the influence of her parents' history upon her own life. But in truth she was deeply afraid, always,—afraid of being her mother over again. . . .

It was a critical moment in their relationship. Roger had judged her cruelly, by the standard of that strange girl who had read poetry to him; and she had failed to meet the test. She was no longer a superior being in his eyes. He ruthlessly stripped her ambitions from her, at the same time that, for the sake of marriage, he gave up his own. Now they were merely a commonplace young man and young woman delaying too long the consummation of their commonplace happiness.

"You want to get married, don't you?" he demanded.

"Yes—of course. . . ."

"Well, if you're going to stop with your music *then*—" It was hardly necessary to finish the question with a point-blank "why not now?"

She shook her head. She couldn't explain. But she attempted to. "You went to college, Roger," she said. "Suppose you were just beginning college, and I wanted us to get married right away. That wouldn't be right."

"Yes, it would," he answered. "College is a waste of time."

"It's all very well for you to say that—but you've *had* college. I haven't had anything."

Anything except a boarding-house background. . . .

"I want to *be* something," she told him.

Roger sighed. "Do you mean that you want to go on and become a singer?" he asked.

"Yes," she said doubtfully. "But I can't do that, very well, if we get married. . . ."

"And you *do* want to get married?"

"Oh, of course. Only—not yet for a while!"

There was a silence, and then she asked:

"Did you really like my singing?" There was a concealed anxiety in her tone.

"Yes," he lied. "It was lovely. And so," he added truthfully, "are you!"

She kissed him; and he returned to the subject of marriage. Why was she so reluctant to talk about it? "Is it because—because we shall be poor?" he asked.

She was thoughtful. "No," she said, "it isn't that I mind so much our being poor. But—we want to have the right sort of friends; and be doing interesting things. And—we're so awfully young, Roger—if we get married right away, we may just settle down to keeping house and saving our money, and worrying. I don't want to do that."

"What do you want, Sally?"

She couldn't tell him. Least of all could she tell him that she wanted him to be again the person he had been at first, a man who promised, somehow, an interesting life to her. Not just settling down and saving money, one could do that in the company of any young man.

But Roger was in a mood in which it seemed heroic and beautiful to settle down and save money. He wanted to make her feel the same way; he was eloquent about the delights of having a home of one's own, and eating meals prepared in one's own kitchen.

"Roger," she said, "I've never told you—but I can't cook."

"No?" He had somehow regarded that as a natural accomplishment of all womenfolk. He was momentarily abashed.

"My mother," she explained, "has cooked all her life. I hate the smell of a kitchen. I swore I never would learn. I can't even fry an egg, Roger. And"—fiercely—"I don't want to learn!"

Roger reassured her. "That's all right," he said. "We can have a cook. Not right away, perhaps. But we could live in furnished rooms for a while, and take our meals out. Or—" he was about to say, "in a boarding-house"; but his density was not quite so great as that. He knew he mustn't say "boarding-house" to her in connection with their future. So

he turned to another aspect of marriage, and began to talk of the lovely babies they would have.

This turn of the discussion seemed more than ever to get on her nerves; but he was so besotted with his new passion for domesticity that he did not realize how deep was her distaste—he thought her withdrawn silence indicative of mere shyness—until at last she burst out with: “Roger, don’t talk to me about babies any more to-night—*please!*”

“Don’t you want babies?” he asked.

“Oh, yes—I suppose I do—some time. Of course I do. But—you see, when I was a little girl we lived for a while with my mother’s sister; it was a year when father was out of a job, and before mother started the boarding-house; and Aunt Nan had dozens of babies, it seemed to me there were dozens, and I had to help take care of them. I was twelve years old—and I spent a whole year wiping babies’ noses, feeding them oatmeal, changing their diapers, carrying them, pushing them around in their perambulators, putting them to sleep, getting up at five o’clock in the morning to heat their milk, and hearing them cry, cry, cry!—until I got to hate babies. I thought Aunt Nan was a fool for having them. I said I’d never have any of my own. Of course, that’s foolishness—it’ll be different when I’m married. But you talk as if having babies was just fun. It isn’t.”

“That’s all right,” he said. “There’s plenty of time—we can wait till we’re able to afford a nursemaid.”

“Anyway,” she said impatiently, “I think it’s silly to be talking about those things *now*.”

“I suppose it is,” said Roger.

They were going to be happy—they were happy now, in their love for each other. Nothing else mattered.

“It’s still early,” she said. “Let’s go somewhere and dance.”

4.

For some two months their happiness lasted, unharmed by such questions and answers. They were together most of the time, in an unfailingly sweet and delightful companionship; but he had evenings in which to think about her and make plans for the future—evenings in which she went out with other

friends. They were musical acquaintances, one or two of whom he had seen—harmless boys, it seemed, nothing to be jealous of; he had been invited to go to some of their parties, but he declined. He did not want to be bored with unfamiliar musical jargon or with the kind of singing that he detested; nor did he want to cut her off from her own friends. He approved of her keeping up these friendships, as long as they meant anything to her.

Meanwhile he became, as he had never been before, an ambitious young business man, anxious to supplant old Billings, deeply pondering the question of borrowing money and going into partnership with the young book-store man whose offer he had once spurned, eager to arrange things so that he could marry his lovely sweetheart.

And then, in December, something happened, the oddest thing, to change him from an eager lover into a cold and cruel tormentor.

He had asked her, for the hundredth time, to come to a definite decision about their marriage. They had taken a long walk through the first snowfall of the year, and had returned tingling to her room. There was a gas-log in the grate, and he lay on the couch looking over her shoulder at the mechanical yellow flame and wishing that it were a fireplace and this room a hut in the woods. His caressing hand, as he asked that familiar insistent question, "When shall we be married?" touched the firm roundness of her breast; she put her hand on his, pressed it, and then gently took his hand away, as she replied slowly:

"June,—let me see,—thirtieth—two years from now! Will that do?"

He sat up abruptly, and looked between the muslin curtains at the driving snow outside. "Yes," he answered in a level, unemotional tone, "that will do."

"Or," she asked teasingly, capturing his hand and restoring it to her bosom, "is that too long to wait? Would you rather I made it—*next* June? Would that please you better?"

"You must please yourself," he answered coldly.

"Oh! It doesn't please you, then?" She sat up in surprise.

"Your attitude doesn't please me," he answered.

"What do you mean?" She brushed a tawny lock of hair away from her eyes to look at him.

He had been made suddenly aware that his demand of her had come to a demand for the complete possession of her body—nothing more. He had nothing else to look forward to in their marriage except the delights of physical intimacy. And she knew this, and was content with it, and was triumphing in her knowledge of it—proud of that hold upon him, happy in his unhappiness. She could tease him about it, offer that happiness to him and then take it away as one might dangle an apple in front of a child just out of his reach. He despised himself for this weakness, and he despised her for caring to play upon it. If this happiness was not something that she desired as much as he, something to be yielded simply and gladly, he did not want it. So he told himself. And meanwhile, he tried to explain to her.

"I mean," he said,—"I can't have you make this marriage a concession to me. If you think you want to wait two years—or"—bitterly—"twenty years—"

"You know, Roger," she interrupted impatiently, "what I think! I *don't* believe it's best for us to marry so soon. But you've been deviling me to—!"

"I suppose I have. I shan't again. I don't want you to marry me against your will."

She stared at him.

"I mean," he said, "you must decide for yourself what you want to do. It mustn't be—just because I ask you."

She remained silent.

"Next June?" he went on, "—you thought that would please me? It doesn't. When you come to me and say *to-day*—that will please me. But *next June*? No. Next June you may feel differently."

"If I promised you," she said sullenly, "I'd keep my promise."

"I don't want such promises," he said.

"If you don't want to marry me—" she began.

"You know I do," he interrupted. "This is a question of what *you* want."

"I've already told you!" she said.

"You've told me—yes, you've told me: *Not now*. You've told me: *Some day*. Well, when that day arrives—"

It became a quarrel.

She was hurt and angry. He was inflexible.

She had offered him a promise. He could take it or leave it. "I leave it," he said.

She: "Then we're not engaged any longer. . . ."

He: "That is as you prefer."

They parted coldly . . . and remained estranged for three days. Then they were reconciled with passionate kisses.

They did not refer to the question over which they had parted. For one thing, it seemed quite absurd to both of them; and for another, they were afraid that any mention of it would set them to quarreling again. They did not know—or care, for the time being—whether they were engaged or not. They only knew that they loved each other.

And then they became formally engaged again, by the presentation from Roger to her—with a mocking air—of a diamond ring, for which he had spent all his savings. She would have been more gratified if it had been presented in a more loverlike way; but his loverlike ways had disappeared forever.

She let him slip the ring on her finger; and then, since their engagement was to remain a secret, she put it on a bit of ribbon and hung it around her neck, so that it was hidden in her bodice. And when he asked, coldly, for a kiss to seal the bargain, she gave him the kiss—coldly. It was more like a quarrel than the renewal of an engagement. . . .

5.

Sally, no doubt, was bewildered. Things had gone wrong, somehow. He should have been elated at a definite promise from her. Instead, inexplicably, he had become angry. What had she done to make him angry? Nothing, surely! And yet . . . there must be something the matter. She became anxious and uncertain.

She had been in awe of Roger from the first. She had, as she confessed, loved him at first sight. He was, unreasonable as that might seem, her Prince; and she was Cinderella. She

had not forgotten him when she left the store. She, in her way, had been trying to make herself the sort of girl that such a man would love. It had been a moment of consternation and joy when she had seen him that evening on the stairs; joy because it was he himself miraculously come back to her, consternation because he had found her in her hated boarding-house. She had triumphed over the boarding-house; she had made him love her—and, under circumstances in which it would have been all too easy to make a fool of herself, she had gained his respect, had made him ask her to marry him.

But an honorable engagement is one thing; and a reckless marriage is another. Sally had never given any good reason to Roger for the secrecy of their engagement. Nevertheless, there was a sort of reason for it, in the nature of her relations with Mr. Kassler, a member of Dr. Deckerman's congregation, who had lent her the money to pay her tuition at the Conservatory. These relations were, in substance, trivial enough. Mr. Kassler was fifty-odd years old, married, respectable, cautious, and unattractive; he was also rich, and a not very critical admirer of singing and singers; he liked to think of himself as an encourager of young talent; and from time to time he lent some young woman of mediocre ability the money to pay for her musical education. He asked in return a little of his young protégée's time and company, by way of hearing her report progress; but he took advantage of his position as benefactor only in the mildest way. He would have been shocked and alarmed if his intentions had been misunderstood; he was content with the opportunities to express a quasi-paternal affection, and delighted if his young protégée sat upon his knee occasionally, stroked his beard, and gave him a daughterly kiss; these trivial endearments, and later, an occasional affectionate letter from New York or Europe assuring him that he was not forgotten, were the utmost of his exactions. Nevertheless he was, in his way, jealous; and Sally was well aware that he would resent bitterly the announcement of her engagement. She did not feel it necessary to explain these things to Roger; they had, in her own mind, no bearing whatever upon their romance. When the time came, and it became necessary to yield to Roger's im-

portunities and get married, she would extricate herself as gracefully as possible from Daddy Kassler's patronage. But meanwhile she was enjoying her year at the Conservatory.

She had felt herself secure in Roger's love and worship; too secure, at times. He had become a little tame; and the picture he persisted in drawing of their married life was rather drab. But she had her own imaginings, though she had not the art to give them words. She had not ceased to be in love with him; and she was proud of her power over him. And then, suddenly, she had seemed to lose her mastery over the situation. She had a glimpse, her first glimpse, of something mocking, scornful, and indifferent, in him. She began to feel perplexed, and afraid.

She was, moreover, from her own point of view, not without reasons for her fear. People who live contradictory lives are given to doing things which they cannot explain, cannot tolerate in themselves, and can only, if they are to have any peace of mind, forget. Her attractiveness, and her impulsiveness, had led her into adventures of which she preferred not to think at all. And of these things the self which was in love with Roger was really unaware. He had touched the core of her nature, had roused and held the romantic child who was one of her selves—a self that despised and preferred to ignore that other self, the boarding-house-keeper's daughter. To this romantic child the affairs of the boarding-house-keeper's daughter would have been disgusting. Her love for Roger was virginal; for this self, that was expressed in her romance with Roger, was as unlike the boarding-house-keeper's daughter as possible—an almost sexless being, for whom the physical endearments of love, when they were not the unconscious effulgence of a dream-like ecstasy, were rude intrusions into her dream-world, hardly less so than her lover's realistic talk of rent, cooks, and babies. This coldness, which had from time to time puzzled and annoyed Roger, was not a pose; it was an effort to escape from her boarding-house past, an effort to be worthy of her dream-Prince.

But Roger, unhappily, wasn't her dream-Prince. He had been entranced with a warm sweet dream of domestic happiness with her; that commonplace dream had already been destroyed; there was nothing left except what had seemed an

authentic bodily hunger for each other; and this mutual passion she had seemed increasingly to deny, and finally to insult, in their quarrel about the date of their marriage.

He had, after all, been conducting this love-affair according to her ideas; he had behaved as an honorable lover, contenting himself with the promise of a happiness to come; but that state of mind had abruptly come to an end. The instinctive wish for possession remained; nothing could kill that. But he resented it; resented her power to arouse that wish. Why should he be so stirred, while she remained cold?

Only, she wasn't consistently cold; she was, as he presently became aware, being deliberately chaste. To impress him, doubtless. . . . And it was true. She had, in her effort to regain the mastery over him, undertaken a willful magnification, a haughty dramatization, of her virtue. In her bewilderment, she was afraid she had shown herself as too human. She wished to regain her lost advantage; and so, on theory, according to her womanly recipe, she denied him kisses.

At night, in his room, after parting from her, he would walk about, waving a cigarette, and talking to himself: "*I am* in love with her," he would say to himself, "but I am not in love with her pretenses, her affectations. These airs of maidenly propriety!"

He paused in the midst of his angry stride, on one of his nights of angry self-communing, to note that preposterous "yard of puppies," with alert ears, affectionate eyes and wobbly little legs, still on the wall. He went over and tore it down, threw it on the floor, and resumed his monotonous protest: "If she were sincere about it, that would be bad enough. But she forgets her proprieties, and then remembers them—she is tormenting herself as well as me. It's ridiculous."

It was ridiculous enough. The enchantment of their early love, in which they had seemed to each other wonderful beings, had vanished; she had rebelled against and spoiled the smug ideal of domesticity that had succeeded it in his mind; more real, perhaps, than either of these two things, the passion of physical desire might have held them together, but even this was being turned into an exasperation.

Humiliated by her reserves, he affected a coldness of his own.

Whereupon, desperately afraid of losing his love, she made it sufficiently plain to him that she would, if necessary, put aside her ideals. There was a moment when the tormenting conflict between them might have been solved by decisively lover-like behavior on his part. But he had ceased to be a lover; he had become a disgruntled philosopher.

Afterward, in his room, he endeavored to explain his indecision to himself: "I can't," he said, "—or I won't—take her except upon such terms as she feels free to offer. I can't have her being ashamed of herself. And she *would* be."

He turned to the box of books which he had that day, at last, opened. The picture from *Jugend of Die Liebesjagt* lay there on top of the packed books, together with the hammer and tacks with which he had been about to tack it into place. He mechanically took up the picture, and stood looking at it. In violent colors and grotesque shapes it set forth an allegory of the love-chase. There were three successive scenes: in the first, a young man, wearing a student's goggles and carrying an old-fashioned blunderbuss in one hand and a dictionary under the other arm, pursued a frightened, naked girl through a moonlit wood; in the second scene she had turned, at bay, and was standing with arms held up as if to implore mercy—while the young man, kneeling at a discreet distance, was tearing pages from the dictionary, loading them into the blunderbuss and firing them at her, pages which the night-breeze unrolled and wafted away before they could reach her; in the third scene, the pages of the dictionary having been shot at her in vain, the young man was discouragedly trudging homeward with the blunderbuss under his arm, while the girl wept with disappointment—and the moon, above, made a sour face. Roger smiled grimly at the allegory. "I never knew how apt it was," he said, and tacked the picture on the wall.

He mused again: "Nevertheless, it is a matter of words—of ideas. It is, curiously enough, an intellectual quarrel. It's not the silliness of her behavior that's intolerable to me, so much as the silliness of her philosophy. . . ."

And accordingly, it was in words, in ideas, that he undertook to re-educate her. He insisted on talking about things

that he knew she regarded as unpleasant. More than once she put her fingers in her ears and refused to listen. But she heard enough to enable her to misunderstand completely his intention.

That was inevitable. His earnest philosophic air baffled her. His argument was not in the form in which it is usually presented by a lover to his beloved. No!—

*"Did not each poet amorous of old
Plead the sweet pretext of the wingèd time
To urge his lady that she be not cold
To the dissolving master of that rhyme!"*

Sally would have understood a prose argument to that effect. But Roger didn't plead the sweet pretext of the wingèd time. He didn't plead anything. He talked about sincerity, honesty, truth. No wonder Sally didn't know what he was talking about!

Why was he preaching at her?—she must have wondered. Her morals were, so far as he was concerned, unimpeachable; her hypocrisies were expressly designed to win his masculine respect. Could it be a question of manners? But her manners were carefully studied according to the best guides. Then could it be her family? That thought troubled her. But Roger hadn't balked at Ma—he treated her, indeed, in a far more friendly fashion than she herself did. The boarding-house? No. What then? Could it be the fact that she hadn't gone to college?

That seemed likely enough to her. He was always reading books; always talking about things she didn't understand. Yes, she must have thought—and really believed—that Roger despised her for her lack of formal schooling. . . .

7.

And so she began to "educate" herself. She began to read books. She chose them on some principle of her own, not asking Roger's advice, taking them home from the public library; and sometimes when Roger wanted her to go out for an evening she would refuse, saying that she "had to read a

book." Her brave attempts to talk to Roger about these books aroused his pity, though it was hard not to laugh sometimes. And yet he didn't quite scorn these efforts at self-culture—not even when she remarked, in a preposterous school-teacherish phrase, upon the "excellent diction" of Bernard Shaw. Roger had lent her *Man and Superman* and urged her to read it, in the hope that she would find there some illuminating criticism of her own moral attitudes; but all she found was excellent diction. She didn't know that Shaw was talking to her about her own life; she thought this was literature. And as such, *Man and Superman* ranked in her mind lower than *The Marble Faun*, which she knew was a classic. Educated people read the classics; so she read *The Marble Faun*, and told Roger as a happy surprise for him. She couldn't understand why he wasn't proud of his little girl for having read clear through that big and tiresome book. "It's a good book, isn't it?" she asked bewilderedly.

If Roger had been the young gentleman hero she took him for—that she took him for now more than ever, in this haughty and difficult mood of his—he would have been pleased and proud. But it was, after all, Roger that she had to please, and not the wraith of an absurd childish ideal. She had fallen in love with Roger all over again, now that she seemed to be in danger of losing him. She adored him passionately; she was desperately anxious to please him; and it was too bad that she couldn't realize how very simple that would have been. . . .

8.

Oddly enough, it was in a discussion of one of those "classics" that the final effort at mutual understanding took place. The classic under discussion was *The Scarlet Letter*. It was Sally's own choice. Roger had recommended Edward Carpenter's *Love's Coming-of-Age*. But she had never heard that book mentioned among the classics, and saw no reason why she should waste her time reading it; Hawthorne, she knew, was the real thing. She told Roger, one night in her room that spring, what she had been reading. And the argument was resumed—more explicitly, this time.

It would seem that of all conceivable ways of clearing up

difficulties between a pair of lovers, intellectual discussion is likely to be the poorest. If Roger had only behaved as a lover and not as a philosopher, Sally might have had some reason for understanding his theories of life; they might have afforded her a justification for having departed from the principles of conduct inculcated by current magazine fiction. But he was too intolerant of human nature to make that easy compromise. . . .

"Yes, and what do you think of *The Scarlet Letter*?" he asked.

She thought she knew how a literary conversation should be conducted. She attempted to pay a tribute to Hawthorne's "wonderful style." Roger impatiently brushed aside these correct phrases. He wanted to know what she thought.

And what she thought, when he finally managed to get her to tell, was this:

"Why, it shows how sin is always punished!"

"Sin?" Roger asked. "What sin?"

She told him primly: "Why the sin of the *Scarlet Letter*!"

"Are you sure," he asked, "that the *Scarlet Letter* wasn't a *Red Badge of Courage*?"

That sidetracked the discussion for a time; one should not be allusive in these matters. Sally wasn't, as might hastily be thought, lacking in intelligence; she was simply a person unacquainted with that form of humor. "Why, *The Red Badge of Courage* is a book about war, isn't it?" she asked. "I haven't read it, but I saw it at the library."

She still thought they were discussing literature.

Roger made a labored attempt to explain his witticism, but stopped abruptly in the middle of his explanations. "Never mind about that," he said. "We were talking about sin."

And so it began, while outside in the soft April night the moon rose above the horizon and gave its silver light and the refuge of its shadows to lovers who were finding easier means of solving their intellectual incompatibilities. . . .

Roger was bringing the definition of sin home to himself. "Do you really think, Sally," he asked, "that I'm damned for the things I've done?"

He would have gone on to tell her of these things; but his question, carelessly phrased, gave Sally the opportunity to

evade the issue by raising the point of what being "damned" really meant. "Even Dr. Deckerman," she said, "doesn't believe in the old-fashioned hell!"

He had failed to make the matter sufficiently personal; and so, in a cold fury of logic, he pressed the definition of "sin" home to—*her*. . . . The effect was tremendous. For the first time, she realized what he was talking about.

"But, Roger!" she cried, springing up and clenching her hands, "why should you say such—such things about me!"

9.

Her face was dead pale in its frame of tawny hair, and there was such fury in her eyes as he had never seen, never imagined. Her breath came hard, and she trembled violently.

Roger was utterly abashed. He had not thought she would take it that way. Emotionally he was convinced that he had, as her bearing told him, made a horrible and false accusation against her. It took an effort of will to keep from stammering out an abject apology. But some small part of his mind kept clear and sane, and whispered to him: "*The accusation isn't horrible and it isn't false. . . .*" He could understand, even in the midst of his overwhelmed emotional dismay, why she should so convincingly enact the rôle of outraged virtue. He had made an assault upon the moral foundations of her life; and if those foundations were lies, they weren't any the less fundamental—to her self-respect, her pride, her faith, her love. It had been necessary that she seem, to the man she loved, and to herself as well, "everything she should be." Most of the time, probably, she had believed, had managed to believe in spite of everything, in her own pretenses. No doubt in the world but that she believed in them at this moment! Her lover was making an accusation which, if true, would rob her of the right to his love. Of course it was false! And of course she denied it! . . .

Roger had forced himself into a painful predicament. He must either accept the dictates of his emotions and humbly ask her forgiveness, or obey the command of his reason and stand by what he had said. It may be guessed that it was his reason and not his emotions that swayed him. Yet he knew nothing

about her—nothing to prove his case in this court in which he had suddenly become prosecuting attorney. How *could* he know? He knew less than nothing. And he was divided against himself; all his emotions told him to believe her! It was an impossible situation. With nothing to go upon except a mere brazen assertion that he hardly meant, he must prove her a liar. Confront the cashier of a bank with the assertion that he has stolen the fund left in his care; say to an aide-de-camp that he has sold the secrets of national defense to his country's enemy; tell a priest that he has worshiped the devil and spat upon the Holy Cross:—and you will know what it was like to tell Sally that she wasn't a chaste virgin. It was preposterous, nightmarish, obscene. But with an exasperated logical malignity, he took up his task.

And, he hardly knew how, he was driving her backward, step by step; panting, scared, she retreated into new defenses of words, and then made her stand, with drawn face and teeth bared in anger, like a wild animal that is cornered. "It's a lie! *a lie! a lie!*" But he had no pity, and now, recklessly, he flung names at her: names innocently divulged to him as those of youths she had "gone with." Poor Sally! None of them had been her young gentleman hero, none of them had been marriageable in her eyes, and there hadn't been any reason why she should seem to them other than she was. Wild guesses!—or, perhaps, deep in his mind, he had known all along. Certainly he appeared to know, now. And she, challenged with these names, and the mocking certainty of her persecutor's demeanor, supposed that somebody must have "told." She demanded to know "who said it"—indignantly, her rage turning aside from her accuser to the base unknown authors of these hateful calumnies. Oh, she was altogether the heroine of a melodrama, on trial for more than her life—for her "good name." And all the while, Roger was imposed on by that flaming righteous anger of hers. It was something not himself, a cold hard theoretic wisdom by which he was possessed, and of which he was the mere unwilling spokesman, that sustained him now. He no longer believed in that wisdom, but he wouldn't, couldn't desert it. He was lashed to the mast of his argument—in another moment that frail vessel would sink under him, and he would go down with it. He asked nothing

more than that—to have it ended, to get away somehow, to have peace from the mournful tragedy of those blazing eyes, and the hurt that cried out in the stricken and yet defiant gesture of her body, the agony of that hard, hoarse, angry, pleading voice. He had finished his accusation, and she denied everything. He had no more to say. She had conquered. . . .

But the thing which possessed him, the hard malignant spirit of truth, spoiled that climax by hurling at her: "What are you making all this fuss about? *Do you suppose I care?*" And these words, more monstrous to her imagination, it would seem, than all the accusations that had gone before, crushed her—and suddenly she was confessing to him. In tears.

They were tears that left Roger cold. He did not understand why. He wondered at it. But he had exhausted his capacity for emotion.

"Can't you forgive me?" she cried, "it was before—before I knew *you!*"

And at that—the final triumph, it seemed to him, of sentimentality, he turned and walked from the room.

10.

But that wasn't the worst. . . . They talked again the next day. He meant well; he wanted to comfort, to console her—and, in the attempt, he tore from her the last shred of her self-respect. He wanted to show her that these reckless escapades of hers weren't "wrong." And it seemed to him at the time that his theoretic consolation was having its due effect. She spoke, without melodrama, of her poor secrets; she was, for the first time since he had known her, doubtless for the first time in her life, frank. She even laughed at herself for having been ashamed. And Roger believed that he had really found at last in her the simple and natural girl who had been so long hidden under these silly rags of lies. . . . She told him the true story of her father and her mother, and what she had feared to become. . . .

But he hadn't counted on the reaction. When she realized what she had told him, she was horrified. She saw herself in the mirror of her own confession—and loathed herself. He had thought that she was human at last; she saw herself as

merely vile. She revealed that conviction in her ashamed coldness the next day; and no arguments of his made any difference.

And—there was, or Roger felt there was, something else . . . to be told. He didn't know what . . . but something she hadn't yet told; something she didn't dare tell. . . .

He thought perhaps he could guess what it was. He wasn't sure. His confidence had disappeared with this new, baffling change of mood in her. He was sure of nothing, now; he had only dark surmises. . . .

But there it was, between them, holding them apart. All that had happened had gone for nothing—unless that last secret, whatever it might be, was dragged to the light.

And Roger was afraid. If that secret were what he thought it was, it would hurt *him*. If, while being for his benefit a picture of maidenly propriety, there had been some other—! . . . No, he had no right to think that. He didn't know. He only knew that he was afraid.

And not on that account only. . . . He himself was used to facing the truth. He had never dreamed that it might be, for others, a terrible experience. He didn't like tragic scenes. He couldn't, he said to himself, go through one again. No. . . . He tried to nerve himself to it. But he couldn't.

She wasn't yet his sweetheart. And he could make her so only by dragging her naked soul again over the live coals of hell; or—he could let her go.

She, too, faced a choice. To her, it was perhaps a choice between keeping that last secret untold, and giving him up. It was a simple secret; it was the secret he had been afraid to guess: the one accidental, inexplicable intrusion of the reckless boarding-house-keeper's daughter into the chaste life of the Young Prince's Beloved. She could confess the faults of her past, before she had pledged herself to him. But afterward—her pride made its last stand there; she could never tell him *that*.

Upon them both was the consciousness of a choice. They sat in silence that night, for a long time. And then she drew his ring from her bosom, broke the bit of ribbon, and without a word offered him the ring.

He took it, feeling a coward.

"Well—let's try to be friends, then," he inadequately said, and held out his hand.

She shook hands, gallantly enough; but she couldn't speak. He went away.

II.

He was ashamed of himself. "With all my fine intentions, I've spoiled everything," he told himself in his room. "Oh—I've no doubt she'll get over it! I'm not such an egotist as to think that I'm necessary to her happiness. I understand her, I think, now that it's too late. She wasn't a liar. She was merely reconciling her belief in herself with the teachings of the world she had been brought up in. She was reconciling these irreconcilable things in the usual way, by denying the truth of her own human nature. In all this she is simply the typical young woman of the modern world. It's her misfortune—and mine—that I'm not the typical young man. Well—I'm tired, and I'm glad it's over."

12.

But that wasn't the end. In real life, things don't stop abruptly; they drag on after their proper climax. . . . When Roger took back his ring, which wasn't what Sally had hoped when she offered it, she was left with no guide but her instincts; and under their guidance she tried to make Roger jealous.

She succeeded. . . . Dick Forrest had recently shown up at Ma Patterson's as a boarder, handsome as ever, and still full of wild schemes for making a fortune. This time it was a silver mine in Mexico. He talked as if the millions he expected to make from this enterprise were already in his hands. He discussed the automobile he was going to buy; he had been down to look at it in the salesroom. He was—or so one would have gathered—already building a house in St. Pierre's most elegant suburb; he had been talking to his architect only yesterday. He was also about to take a jaunt through Europe, stopping at Monte Carlo and other celebrated pleasure-resorts; he had made inquiries concerning accom-

modations. And meanwhile the suit which he wore had the shine of poverty. Strangely enough, as it seemed to Roger, everybody at the boarding-house liked Dick Forest's magnificent talk. In default of real riches, they enjoyed sharing in Dick's imaginary riches. . . . It was Dick that Sally began to flirt with.

Roger told himself that he didn't mind Sally going with another man; it was the bad taste of choosing Dick Forrest that offended him. . . . But it was painful to see her look at Dick; she looked at him with apparent fondness, and that look stirred up tormenting memories. If only he didn't have to see them together, he wouldn't care. . . . He decided to move to another boarding-house.

Sally came to his room and found him packing. "Are you really going away?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," he said.

Neither of them could speak the words that might have reconciled them.

"By the way, I've a book of yours," she told him. He remembered. It was *Love's Coming-of-Age*.

"You may keep it," he said.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Well, then—good-by."

"Good-by."

But even that wasn't quite the end.

13.

He did not see her again until June. . . . A curious train of thought had led him to her. In an automobile that stood waiting the traffic-cop's signal at the corner of White Falls' busiest streets, he saw a girl in white furs. Those furs, so incongruous with the weather, arrested his idle attention. The phrase "white-fox furs" came into his mind, and he remembered Fanny Mears. He wondered if Fanny would ever receive the reward of her virtue. And then he thought of Dick Forrest. He wondered if Dick Forrest would by any chance ever stumble into the millions he was always talking about. And he thought how appropriate it would be if Fanny should marry Dick. . . . Impulsively, he decided to go to see Sally. He felt that he could see her without being hurt, now.

He went that night to the boarding-house. Sally was in, and received him with a surprised cordiality. He hardly knew what to say to her, but she solved that problem by suggesting, "Let's go somewhere and dance."

After they had danced for a while he ventured to ask, "How's Dick?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "He's gone to Mexico, to look after his silver mine."

"Really?"

"So he says."

"Hm!"

"You don't suppose I believe everything he tells me, do you, Roger? I'm no fool. But—it's fun to pretend. I know you don't think so. You never would pretend anything. You were always so—"

She paused for the word, and he supplied, "Realistic." He believed that he was a realist.

"Yes. You don't know how to play."

"And Dick does?"

"Yes—he does." She laughed. "I helped him build his house. We went and looked at the place where we were going to build it—we interviewed the real-estate agents, and everything. You'd think that was silly, I know. But when you can't have what you want—well, I don't see the harm in imagining things. We went to Europe, too—I remember we quarreled because he wanted to go on to Monte Carlo, and I wanted to stay in Venice!"

"I suppose it's all right," said Roger, "but it seems a queer form of amusement to me."

"Yes, I know." She sighed. "I had to pretend all by myself, when—when we were in love. And then, when I had pretended something perfectly lovely, you would go and—" She hesitated.

"Spoil it," he finished grimly.

"Well—yes," she admitted.

"I'm sorry."

"Oh, it's all right. That's just—your way."

"Sally," he asked suddenly, "is it all off between you and Dick?"

"Oh—we aren't engaged, if that's what you want to know."

"What I really want to know is—are you lovers?" he demanded.

"You've no right to ask that," she said coldly.

"No," he said sadly, "I suppose not."

"I can tell you this," she said. "I don't really love him—and I never have. It's been just—playing. Now let's dance."

They danced.

"May I come and see you again?" he asked, when he took her home.

"If you want to," she said.

14.

A few evenings later he came again, and again they went somewhere to dance.

Again he felt impelled to say something about Dick.

"I never expect to see Dick again," she said calmly.

The universe suddenly righted itself in Roger's mind. His moodiness vanished, he was able to talk and laugh with her as in the first days of their companionship. She looked at him curiously, uneasily.

Presently they were sitting at a table beside the dancing floor, sipping their lemonade. Roger made some trivial remark, and as he did so he reached out to take her hand that lay on the table idly fingering a straw. It seemed to him that with Dick gone there existed no obstacle to their love. For he did love Sally: how could he have doubted it?

His lips were quivering on the verge of utterance, utterance of this happy discovery, when Sally withdrew her hand and said, quietly:

"I think I'd better tell you why Dick left town."

She must have realized what he was going to say, must have wished to forestall his declaration. Only he didn't at first understand. "Why Dick left town?" he repeated. "To keep from paying his debts, I suppose!"

She smiled. "Yes—to keep from paying a debt—a debt that may come due."

Her way of saying it told him more than her obscure words. And then it was as if he had known it all along. But he cried, as if to negate the fact with a word, "No!"

"Oh—yes," she said calmly. "At least that was what he

was afraid of. It isn't certain—yet. But—such things happen. And—I don't know that I blame Dick. You needn't be angry at him. It was my fault. I was foolish, and now—maybe—I'll have to pay for it. I don't know why I've told you. But if it's true, you'd know anyway—or suspect. Oh, you needn't look so tragic, Roger. It'll be all the same a hundred years from now. Listen! that's a lovely three-step!"

"But, Sally," he asked, in an awed whisper, "what are you going to do?"

"I don't want to talk about it," she said. "Come on, let's dance."

In a daze, he rose and took her in his arms, and they swept out among the dancers. And at something, or nothing, she laughed that soft golden laugh of hers. What she had just told him seemed utterly unreal. "I can't realize it," he whispered.

She pressed his hand reassuringly. "I don't want you to," she said. "I don't myself. It *isn't* true!"

"But if it were—I" he insisted.

"Oh, never mind!"

"What would you do?"

"If I told you, you'd not believe me—so I guess I'll tell you!" She put her lips to his ear, and whispered: "*I'd kill myself.*" Then she laughed. That laughter, low and sweet, gave the words a thrill of horror beyond even what they held of horrible significance. "Let's stop talking nonsense!" she added.

He tried to speak, but she hushed him. "Forget it—please! No—not another word, if we're going to be friends," she pleaded.

Friends! . . . Roger had never realized until this moment how much Sally meant to him. A terrific conviction came to him as they danced. . . . He strove to consider this conviction soberly in the light of all facts.

They reached their table. They sat down. . . . He knew what Sally was like. She was afraid of ugliness. She would never face this fact, because it was ugly. She had never faced, realistically, such a possibility; she was utterly unprepared for it. That was absurd, but it was true. And she wouldn't listen to any one who tried to talk to her about it. She would stop

her ears, as she had done more than once when he had tried to talk to her about "ugly" things. She would go on hoping for the best, until the fact in its ugliness became inescapable; and then—but, no, that whispered threat of hers was too preposterous! . . . There was only one way of making this fact acceptable to her mind. Or so it seemed to Roger. It was the thing to do. And he would do it. . . . The world might consider it silly; but he did not care. It was beautiful and sane.

He leaned forward, and took her hand, resolutely. "Sally," he said, "will you marry me—to-morrow?"

Sally held his hand tightly between both of hers for a moment. "You're a dear," she said, "to want to." She took her hands gently away. "But I couldn't, you know. Not now. Not after—what I've told you."

"But, Sally—" he said helplessly.

She leaned forward and said in a thrilling undertone, "I wish —" and then stopped herself, and looked away.

"What?" he asked.

"Foolishness," she said. "I'm always pretending something that isn't so. Come, let's dance."

He understood her wish. And he blamed himself that it wasn't true. Why had he forever let phantom ideals, his and hers, stand between them? He was consumed with a passion of regret.

As they came back from the dance, she said: "If you'll promise not to talk about this any more—perhaps I'll let you ask me that question again—some time." That was the utmost concession she would make; and she seemed half-sorry to have made it. "I don't know why I said that." And he understood why she was half-sorry. *She* could forget; but he would not forget; and she wished to be to her lover the ideal woman, unsmirched by such memories. "You must promise not to say anything more about it!"

"I can't promise that," he said.

"Please!"

And so, perplexed and baffled by her insistence, he said no more on the forbidden topic. . . . There was, in this demand of hers for silence, something at once pitiful and stern. It was as if by speaking of it, the thing she feared would be

made true. It was something not to be thought about. He was not her friend, but her enemy, if he reminded her of what she wished to deny. . . . How could he deal with a mind that defended itself against reality by silence and forgetting? He didn't know. He was angry and puzzled.

He wished that he could take her attitude—of pretending that unpleasant things are not so. It is what one does when there appears to be nothing else to do; and in the end, he did almost take that attitude. There must be, he told himself, some method in this feminine madness. In her life such contingencies as this could not be altogether unprovided against. He must not intrude further into her pitiful secrets. He must wait. . . .

When they said good-night, she pressed his hand warmly, and impulsively and fleetingly brushed his lips with hers. "I do like you, Roger," she said. "You've been terribly nice to me. . . ."

15.

During the following week, Roger went to see her every evening. But a strange hostility had descended between them. It could perhaps be explained by the fact that Sally regretted her confession to him, and the fact that he—in a sense—regretted his offer to her. Only in a sense; he was ready to stand by his offer, if only she would take it seriously. But he was beginning to think of all the things that separated them, the things that in his moment of revelation had seemed so trivial to him. No, not her secret—not that; but differences of mind. This terrible imposed silence was a mark of those differences. If they couldn't talk about a thing like this—! He started to speak of it more than once, but was always rebuked, or even scoffed at, and told that he must not take a joke too seriously. A joke! Thereafter he held his peace. And, in that silence filled with dancing and trivial conversation, they brooded separately upon life and fate.

Roger's offer was, he supposed, of a kind unheard of among ordinary people. He didn't mind. He knew it was a thing that he would never regret. It was made in earnest, out of the depths of his emotions.

Having made it in earnest, it was a blow to his vanity to find

that it was rejected in earnest. . . . Yes, rejected utterly; it was a thing that—in the world of ideals in which Sally lived—couldn't be done. And Sally was, bravely and absurdly, an idealist to the last.

They brooded, with whatever pretenses of gayety they could muster, all that week. And then came Mrs. March's invitation to Roger to visit Winga Bay.

16.

Mrs. March had stopped in the store to buy some books, and Roger had mentioned that he would not be there during the next two weeks; it was his vacation. Mrs. March asked him where he was going, and he said he didn't know. "Won't you come out," she asked, "to Winga Bay? My husband wants to meet you, and there are lots of things to talk about. Come out on Sunday, prepared for a two weeks' stay." He had half-declined, but she said, "We shall expect to see you on Sunday."

He wanted to go. If it were not that it would have meant leaving Sally to face her troubles alone, he would have gone gladly.

"There are lots of things to talk about." And even if he couldn't dream of talking to Mrs. March about the thing most on his mind, the idea of talk was in itself tremendously appealing. There was no one in the ordinary circle of his life to talk to. He might as well have been back in Plainsburg. . . .

What, if Sally's troubles were censored out, was left to talk about? Everything!—the whole world of ideas, the indefinite but imperial realm of intellectual conversation. For what is called intellectual conversation is an escape, like that afforded to some by art, and to others by religion, from the encompassing and stifling walls of the present. Roger had not, temperamentally, much fondness for life "as it is." At this moment more than ever it seemed to him a hideous and meaningless welter of ugly accident, stupidly acquiesced in. And in this world he stood rebellious and alone. Sally was his fellow-victim, but not his companion. He was lonely. And if he was to bear the burden of those meaningless accidents which appeared to constitute life, he must have the occasional relief

of an escape into some realm of beauty and order, some clear atmosphere of sane logic, some place where things have a meaning. One person cannot stand alone against the world.

Perhaps Mrs. March had seen in his eyes some mute appeal for help; perhaps that was why she had asked him out to Winga Bay. At all events, whatever her motives, she had offered him the only help that he could take. "There are lots of things to talk about." That promise of talk gleaned like the green mirage of an oasis in the desert of his lonely silence: a mirage, for, because of Sally, he couldn't go.

But when he told Sally about the invitation, she said, "Why, of course you will go! Let's see, now—you must take the right clothes."

"Clothes!" he fretted. "What would clothes matter?"

"A great deal!" she said. "Have you any flannel shirts?"

"No," he said; and then asked curiously, "why flannel shirts?"

"To wear," she said briefly. "Get a pencil and paper." He obeyed her; and she, leaning a little wearily back on the cushions of her couch, dictated: "White flannel trousers, two pairs." Roger wrote, wondering if his white flannels had been eaten up by moths. "A blue serge coat." He had that—a relic of his folly. "Four soft white shirts with collar attached. Those are your dress-up clothes. Now for everyday. A pair of khaki trousers. Two flannel shirts, blue or gray, doesn't matter. And your oldest suit of summer clothes."

"They have a patch on them," said Roger.

"That's all right. Take them along."

"I thought," he confessed, "when you first spoke of clothes, that you meant a dress-suit, or some such nonsense."

"How ridiculous! at a summer camp!" she said.

"But now you are going to the other extreme. What is this old suit, with a patch on it, for?"

"To put on," she said patiently, "when your khakis have got soaked with lake-water. And, oh, yes—a bathing suit. You don't play tennis, so you mustn't take a racquet along."

"But I don't swim, either," he protested.

She laughed. "What do you think you are going to do at Winga Bay? Talk?"

"Exactly," he said.

"Well—I've told you what to take," she said; "you can do as you like."

"Thank you," he said humbly. "But—do you think I had better go?"

"Of course you will go," said Sally firmly.

Well—if she wouldn't talk to him, what good could he do by staying?

"I'd rather like to go," he admitted.

"You'd be a fool not to," she told him.

"Well. . . " he said.

Sally arose. "Good-by, then. I can't see you to-morrow night." To-morrow was Saturday.

"Oh?" he said.

"Dick is in town—and wants to see me."

"He is?"

"No, don't ask me any questions. I'll tell you all about it—sometime. You can write to me, if you want to. Good-by!" she held out her hand.

He looked at her, half-angry, half-puzzled. Would her sense of the proprieties make her marry that cowardly fool? But what was the use to ask?

He said nothing. He was too deeply hurt to say anything—hurt by the vast possibilities of stupidity in the mind framed by that lovely body of hers. And even more baffled than hurt. If she could only *tell* him! But no—she couldn't.

"Don't look at me like that," she said. "It'll be all right. Good-by."

What he could not have realized was the significance, at once tragic and absurd, that in Sally's mind attached to his departure. . . . His visit to the Marches symbolized for her an entrance into precisely that world to which she had all her life desired to belong: the upper world of leisure, of freedom, of culture, of respectability assured and complete. He was being given an opportunity, such as she would have bought with her heart's blood, to go into that world—and if he wasn't a fool he would make himself welcome and stay there.

He was entering that realm of light and life, and leaving her here in this grotesque and ugly boarding-house world from which she had so long and vainly tried to escape—and in which she was perhaps caught, now, like a rat in a trap. . . .

CHAPTER SEVEN : Winga Bay

I.

EARLY Sunday afternoon the street-car took him to Lake Minnewinga. Every few miles there was a stop, within sight of a cluster of bungalows and cottages along the beach.

Winga Bay was one of these stops. As Roger got off there, a youth in white flannels and with his hair slicked back, descended from a big automobile and came up to him. "You're Roger Leland, aren't you?" he asked. "Mr. March sent me to bring you. My name's Louis Todd."

They shook hands, climbed into the car, and were off toward the beach.

"You went to Herald, didn't you? I'm going to Scott," said the boy. "Junior—that is, I shall be, this next year. Nice day for a picnic, isn't it? We usually do picnic on Sundays. I was afraid this morning it was blowing up for a rain."

He had the air of a boy who is trying to be at ease with one of his elders. Roger wondered if he looked as solemn as all that. No doubt there was some constraint in his attitude. For he had been reminded, as he looked out at the sparkling waters of the bay, that across the lake was Rosetta. The memory of Stumble Inn and its night's phantasmagoria flashed vividly through his mind in a series of disconcerting pictures.

He was all the more disconcerted, because he had unconsciously been making up speeches to say to Mr. and Mrs. March. He really didn't have anything to say to this infantile college youth. "Yes," he replied to all the boy's remarks.

Louis gave him a puzzled sideways glance and desisted from his efforts. He might have wondered what sort of kill-joy had been imported into their happy camp. But doubtless if

Mr. and Mrs. March had wanted this fellow to come, it was all right.

They arrived at the March place. It was a large bungalow with sun-parlor and dining-porch, and sleeping-tents scattered about it. The table was being set on the porch as they came in, by a girl of about Louis' age. Roger was introduced and turned over to her, the boy going out hastily as if the fatigue of further conversation with Roger would be too much. The girl's name was Barbara. She was a small, dark, vivacious young person.

"You can help me set the table," she said. "I'll show you where things are. Bring six of those plates. And there are the knives and forks. I suppose you're wondering where Mr. and Mrs. March are. They're out walking. They usually take a walk just before dinner. I'm Mrs. March's cousin, and Louis is a sort of nephew. Not a real nephew, but Pen and Brad are very fond of him, and he spends his summers here. Little Janet's out playing somewhere. And I suppose you know that Pen's going to have another baby? I mention it, because Janet's very excited about it, and will probably say something—and if you didn't know, you might be fussed!"

No, Roger hadn't known. And he felt a pang of envy, on behalf of Sally, envy of this fortunate woman whose unborn baby could be spoken of aloud, without shame. . . .

"And that's Mrs. Thompson in the kitchen; she's the cook," said Barbara; "and her husband's out in the garden pulling lettuce for dinner, or ought to be. And that's all about us. You went to Herald, didn't you? I'm going to Scott. So is Louis."

"Yes, so he said," and Roger arranged the knives and forks.

"We're going out in the launch a little later, and stop somewhere and have a picnic supper. You can help me make sandwiches. Don't forget."

"I won't," he promised.

"The cook goes off, you know, after dinner. And Louis isn't much good helping with sandwiches. He cuts the bread too thick. Do you swim?"

"No," he said firmly.

"You'll learn easily enough. You'll pick it up. You can't

help it, around here. Brad's very good, he can still beat all of the boys. Pen's pretty good, too; and so's Louis. I'm a dub; but Louis says I'm improving. You've forgotten the bread-and-butter plates."

Roger brought them.

She glanced at his white flannels. "Did you bring some old clothes? We don't dress up except on week-ends, you know. If you didn't, Louis can lend you some things." Barbara was wearing a natty sport-suit of white linen.

"I was warned," he said, "to bring some khaki trousers; but I'm sorry to say they're disgracefully new."

"They won't look new very long," she said.

"Do you do nothing but play here, all the time?" he asked.

"Of course, that's what we're here for. By the way, do you dance?"

"A little," he said. He had some foolish idea that they might dance differently here.

"Good," she said. "That will do, now. Everything's ready for dinner. Let's put on a record while we're waiting."

She chose a three-step, and turned on the phonograph. "That's very nice. Let's do another. You have almost all the new steps. Do you know this one?"

He didn't, but learned it readily, and they were dancing when Mr. and Mrs. March arrived. Roger looked at Mrs. March with a new interest, and again that pang of unreasonable envy came as he thought of Sally.

2.

"Hello!" said Mrs. March. "I see you're quite at home. Roger, this is my husband."

Roger shook hands with Mr. March. He was a tall, gentle-looking man, of a youthful carriage of body, but with hair gray at the temples, and a touch of gray in the little close-trimmed beard he wore; his eyes were alert and kindly, and his mouth seemed always about to smile. Roger liked and respected him at once.

Janet came running in—a slim little thing with straight black hair.

"And here's our little girl," said Mr. March, lifting her in his arms. "This is Roger Leland, Janet!"

The slim little girl put out her hand and said, "How do you do?"—looking at him fearlessly out of her dark eyes. "Did you know Pen was going to have a baby!" she said.

They laughed. "Janet feels she has to tell everybody," said Pen.

Her father put her down, and she ran to the table and began to climb into her chair.

The cook announced that dinner was ready. Barbara went to the door and called Louis, who answered from the garage, and in a minute they were seated at the table.

Roger was hungry for talk. Of course, Sally had been right—he would be expected to do something here besides talk. During the process of his inquisition, while he set the table for Barbara, he had made up his mind to a program of behavior; he wasn't going to let these young people think him a kill-joy. He felt an irrational confidence in any scheme of life ordained by Mrs. March; if she had brought these youngsters under her roof and given them authority to take helpless strangers and teach them to play games, he would submit. He would more than submit, he would enter as far as possible into the spirit of the place. He would, to the best of his ability, play tennis. He would, if that were really expected of him, learn to swim. Fortunately, he could dance already; and all these other accomplishments should be added unto him. If it came hard, no one should know it; he would go to his torments with a smile. He would do all this for the sake of Mrs. March, and would feel amply rewarded by such hours of talk as he might have with her and her husband during those two weeks. This, the dinner hour, promised to be the first opportunity for such intellectual communion. Barbara and Louis would scarcely join in this talk, any more than little Janet; but they could be still and listen to it respectfully.

But it appeared that the Marches had different ideas of dinner conversation. They talked in a light, friendly, gay manner about little and chiefly personal things. These personal comments might have been unintelligible to a stranger, but they were continually translated by one or another person

for Roger's benefit. He was being made intimate not only with the casual behavior and the humorous idiosyncrasies of all those at the table, but also with the traits of all their neighbors. The spirit of these remarks might be described as one of innocent and affectionate malice. *Malice* may seem too strong a word; yet if malice, instead of being shut in the cellar, and emerging only at times with a dirty face and uncombed hair and violent grimaces, were brought up to have good manners and a cheerful disposition, that would be the proper term! Roger felt that when he came to dance with the Iverson girls next door, or play tennis with the Wolf boys who lived just beyond, he would feel well acquainted with them.

The thing that most of all impressed him was that everybody called Mr. and Mrs. March "Brad" and "Pen"—the last apparently a diminutive of Penelope. They in turn addressed everybody by a first name, including Roger—whom they called "Roj." Mrs. March started it in a natural and affectionate and motherly fashion; Janet and Barbara took it up at once with equal naturalness; Louis used the term with some uneasiness at first; and Mr. March uttered it with what seemed to Roger a gravely humorous appreciation of his surprise. Evidently he was there not as Mr. Leland but as the boy Roj. He found it not very difficult to speak to the others by their first names; but he could not bring himself to say "Pen" or "Brad."

The assumption was that they were all children together. The air of parental wisdom which he had found so offensive in his Uncle Abner and Aunt Lucy was conspicuously absent from the manner of Mr. March and Mrs. March. That was what made it impossible for him to talk about the things he wanted to talk about; he would have had to exhibit an incongruously serious and elderly attitude, or else translate his ideas into more warmly personal and homely terms, which he had not yet learned how to do.

He did not give up the hope of the conversation taking on a more serious cast—leaving the younger people to their own concerns, while he and Mr. and Mrs. March discussed ideas. But the conversation persisted on this childish level. There was hardly a word said that little Janet herself could not un-

derstand. She was taking part in it as freely as everybody else, and was listened to and responded to quite as much as Mr. March himself.

Once, in fact, when a remark was made which everybody laughed at except Janet, and her puzzled air seemed to demand an explanation, it was given to her, just as it would have been given to Roger. The remark was a humorous reference to the state of emotional affairs between one of the Wolf boys and one of the Iverson girls. They were secretly engaged, and the joke turned on the fact that this was no secret at all, but the most talked-of thing in the little community.

"Janet doesn't understand," observed her mother, "and I don't wonder. Jokes about love are very complicated. Can you explain, Brad?"

"You know what an engagement is, don't you?" her father asked.

"Yes," said Janet, "it's a card you send out."

The others laughed. But Mr. March said, "Janet is quite right. A formal engagement is a card you send out, saying who's going to be married. I know a little girl," he went on, "who told us last summer that she was going to marry Jimmie Tucker. And now that little girl's changed her mind. Not that Jimmie isn't a nice boy and all that, but she doesn't like him this year as well as she did last. Now if cards had been sent out to everybody, that little girl would have felt kind of foolish, don't you think? Olga and Walter are older than Jimmie and that little girl, but they're not so *very* old, and their fathers and mothers want them to take another year to change their minds in if they feel like it. You see, if they change their minds before the cards are sent out, that's nobody's business but their own; but if they should change their minds afterward, everybody would be surprised and ask questions about why it was. So Walter and Olga can't have a regular engagement yet. But they can play at having an engagement if they want to. They call their play-engagement a secret engagement, and that's what we were laughing at, because everybody knows all about it!"

"How old do they have to be?" Janet asked, in no way embarrassed by this scarcely disguised reference to her own young faithlessness.

"Old enough to have finished college, usually," said Mr. March. "But different people have different opinions about that. And some people don't send out cards at all. They just go and get married."

"That's what I'll do!" said Janet.

"You may change your mind about *that*, too," said Barbara.

It might have seemed cruel to have thus kept reminding little Janet of her broken promise to Jimmie; but Janet wasn't offended. And the reason must have been that everybody was always being reminded, with just such playful humor, of things they might have been sensitive about. Not even Mr. March was exempt; to Roger's astonishment, Louis did not hesitate to indulge in a quip at his expense, which, being explained, turned out to be one of the March family jokes. It was about a motorcycle Mr. March had bought. He owned only the one car, which was at the disposition of the family, and he had recently decided, against their advice, to motorcycle in to town and back. The first morning, he arrived at his office for an important conference with clothes streaked with oil and caked with dust! Roger could not imagine any one daring to banter Uncle Abner about such a mishap; and he was pleased to see that Mr. March took it with a smile.

It was a school of spiritual robustness, this dinner-table talk. To-day, as it happened, Louis was the chief victim, Barbara the most merciless tormentor. Roger perhaps showed too plainly his enjoyment of what ought to have been, even if it did not seem to be, Louis' discomfiture; for Barbara turned to him and said, "Wait! it will be your turn next! You needn't think you are going to be let off easy."

Roger said something about being glad to be butchered to make a Barbaric holiday.

Louis groaned. Janet looked puzzled, and turned to Barbara. "What does he mean?" she asked.

"That, dear," said Barbara, "is a pun; and a pun is the *lowest* form of wit."

"In some places," added Louis solemnly, "people are fined as much as five cents for making them. That's the rule in our crowd."

"It's also another crime," said Mr. March quizzically, "known as Literary Allusion. It is a sort of showing-off of

one's knowledge of books—and that's something that neither Louis nor Barbara is likely to be guilty of!"

"What did you say a pun was?" pursued Janet.

"I'll explain to you some other time, dear," said Barbara. "Let's not say anything more about it now. It'll only make poor Roj feel bad. Let's just go on as if nothing had happened."

"I'll explain it to you myself, Janet," said Roger. "It's a funny trick you do with words."

"It isn't spelling, is it?" Janet asked doubtfully. "I can spell my own name," she added. "J-a-n-u-p."

Roger had by this time given up the hope of intellectual conversation. Perhaps later in the day. . . .

3.

After dinner he and Barbara made sandwiches. Then the Iverson girls came over—Olga, tall and stately in spite of her mere seventeen years, and her little youngster sister, Ellen, sometimes called "Reddy" because of her flaming hair; and they all piled into the launch and went on their picnic, Janet going along. With the advent of the strangers, even though he knew so much of their intimate history—particularly of Olga's, who seemed cheerful enough in the absence of her almost-fiancé—Roger had a relapse into shyness. He devoted himself to Janet and taught her the art of making puns.

They landed somewhere, and Ellen showed him how to build a picnic fire. They ran races—anything to use up their over-flowing muscular energy!—they jumped over sticks, the girls doing this expertly and beautifully. At last they ate their sandwiches and drank their coffee; and then Janet fell asleep. This was her night of freedom; on other days she had to go to bed at eight o'clock; but on Sunday she could stay up until almost all hours—and so, content with the right to stay awake, she fell peacefully to sleep in Roger's arms beside the bonfire at eight o'clock.

Presently they re-embarked; the dusk turned into silver moonlight on the lake; they stopped and drifted, and sang sentimental songs, college songs—Roger, somewhat to his surprise, joining in.

They reached home not very late, but tired, said good-night to the Iverson girls, and went to bed. There was no intellectual conversation that night.

Early the next morning Roger was awakened in his sleeping-tent by Janet, who told him to hurry up and dress, breakfast was 'most ready. She wanted to tell him a pun she had invented. Like other people's puns, it seemed very far-fetched; but Roger loyally applauded it; and thus encouraged, she made outrageous puns all through breakfast, while the others discussed what would be a fitting punishment to inflict upon Roj.

He had put on his flannel shirt and khaki trousers, but he still felt rather painfully dressed-up beside Louis' oil-stained ducks and Barbara's middie-blouse and bloomers. There was an eagerness, an impatience, at breakfast, as if the restraints imposed by Sunday clothes had been endured quite as long as was humanly possible; and if Roger had thought this group avid of physical exertion yesterday, he was soon to find that they had been politely quiet in deference to the tradition of Sunday as a day of rest.

Mr. March left for town on the street-car, and the rest of them went over to the community tennis-court; except Janet, who was off playing with the younger Tucker and Vance children. Little Ellen Iverson of the gorgeous hair condescended to teach Roger the elements of tennis. But mostly he sat on the side and looked on.

At eleven, when the lake was warm with sun—at least, they said it was warm—they went swimming. Despite Sally's advice, Roger had not brought along a bathing-suit; but his discretion availed him nothing, for Louis provided him with an old pair of trunks. The bathing place was a kind of inlet which formed a natural pool, with a sandy floor that slanted gently in to land, and one steep side where two quivering, teetering boards had been fixed in place.

Barbara, a charming teacher in a boy's bathing-suit and sunbrowned arms and legs, took Roger's education in her charge. He had had no opportunities for swimming in Plainsburg; and he was under the impression that he hated and feared the water. Clinging to a loose rope that hung along the shallower side of the pool opposite the diving-place, he felt certain he would drown if he ventured out. But with

everybody swimming, including Mrs. March, and even little Janet tumbling about in the water like a porpoise, he could not refuse to try. He took a long breath, surrendered his will to Barbara's expert directions, let go the rope, and lay face down in the water. Her voice came to him strangely muffled.

"See, you're all right! You're floating! Just stay that way a while. It will give you confidence." His open eyes saw the sand, with Barbara's distorted shadow on it, broken by ripples, and her brown legs, a reassuring sight. He felt her hands under his finger-tips. That upward pressure steadying his hands, the broken shadow, those firm brown legs, the muffled sound of her voice, these were all that united him to the outside world. How deep was it here? Not very deep, for she was standing up. He wasn't in any danger. It was odd, how long one could hold one's breath! "When you want to breathe, press your hands down on mine, and stand up."

He was on his feet again, in a world with air in it, a world where there were other directions besides down, a world in which Barbara had a smile, and wet curls, and not just legs and a broken shadow, a world in which her voice came distinctly. "That's right. It's not so bad, is it?"

"No, it's not so bad," he admitted.

"All right. Now, again." And again he was out of the world of air and clear sunlight, in a formless watery world of broken lights and shadows and a dim voice. "Make movements with your feet. No, not like that. Up."

Up. "We'll try all over again." Down. "Yes, like that. Keep on. Keep on. Now—up! Yes, up!"

"Did you know you were swimming? Now watch me. This way." She swam slowly across the pool and back, and stood beside him again. "You can do that," she said.

Doubting, he obeyed. "No—yes! that's it. That's right. Both together—good. That's right." Silence, while he performed, as if in a vacuum, complicated and exact movements with his arms and legs. "More slowly!" Was he actually moving? Yes, for the sand was sliding past jerkily underneath, Barbara's shadow was splashed and spatted about, and her brown legs were stepping back quickly, dancing away from him. He swam toward them. The sandy floor was getting

nearer to his eyes. He was in shallow water, close to the shore. "Now up! up!"

He stood erect.

"That was splendid! You'll soon be a swimmer."

He would, or die; he did not particularly care which.

They stopped to watch Janet. This morning, for the first time in her life, she was to dive from the spring-board. It was the lower spring-board, of course, but it must have seemed high and precarious to a child. If it did, Janet gave no sign of trepidation. Standing erect, she looked out at the others boldly, confidently, gayly,—and then, bending, plunged into the water without a splash. She came up, rolled over for a mouthful of air, and then went on calmly swimming. Why should she be afraid? Wasn't her mother there, and wasn't that spring-board made for little folks to dive from?

Then a shower, clothes again, and lunch. Then more tennis. And then another swim late in the afternoon. And then dinner. By this time Roger's khakis looked less disgracefully new. The girls were all dressed in middie-blouses and bloomers, except when they were in their bathing suits, which was a great deal of the time. Life was being lived on so frankly physical and muscular a plane that Roger was glad to realize, as he ran races and played hand-ball on the beach dressed in Louis' old trunks, that his own body though muscularly neglected and awkward was nothing that he need be ashamed of in this Spartan company. He noted that his readiness to submit cheerfully to this social discipline, was all they asked of him; they supplied the discipline, not merely with cheerfulness but with patience and skill and, above all, sublime group-confidence. Perhaps if Roger had remained in their society longer, he might have become fully initiated into their simple, primitive, happy mode of life, in which intellectual doubts and curiosities played so slight a part and conscious rebellious idealism none at all.

4.

He wrote to Sally, telling her that Mrs. March was going to have a baby, and that it was regarded as a simple and natural and happy fact—which was, he said, as it always

should be. And a few days later he had a note from Sally in reply:

"Dear friend— I received your very interesting letter, and am glad you are having an enjoyable time. I am getting ready for a visit to my cousin Delia at Springhaven, on Otter Lake. It is a very nice place. There is dancing and rowing. I expect to be gone about two weeks. If you want to write, the address is care of Delia Parker, Parker's Inn, Springhaven. Sincerely yours, Sara."

In his next letter Roger wrote of swimming and picknicking with no allusion to more serious matters. For the time, he could feel no real anxiety about her. That part of his life to which she had belonged seemed now like a bad dream. He could not as yet draw together in one coherent universe the desperate hopes and fears of Sally, and the life, playful and serene, which he had found here. He was glad that he could almost forget about Sally; glad to be able to rest his mind for a while from his futile worries. His darker apprehensions seemed, somehow, in this environment, fantastic and absurd.

The undercurrent of thought that persisted in his mind in the midst of these continuous physical exertions was less concerned with Sally than with an attempt to relate this life here at Winga Bay to his previous notions of America.

He was struck by a paradox, a paradox of which Mrs. March was the center—for all this life seemed to flow out of her imagination, it was something she had created.

With all his respect for her intellectual capacities, Roger had never cherished any illusions as to the limitations within which her mind operated. She taught a Sunday School class; and she believed nominally in all the things that his Plainsburg aunts believed in. On the other hand, she wasn't suspicious of unfamiliar ideas, wasn't dogmatic in rejecting them. She thought of herself, no doubt, if she ever felt the need of a defining term, as "progressive." But she would never have dreamed of calling herself revolutionary. She was a steadfast believer, not in things as they are, but in the increasing perfectability of things by familiar modes of improvement. She wouldn't have wished for violent change in anything.

She was bringing up her little girl and these older children whom she had brought under her roof, and the girls and boys of Scott college so far as they came under her influence, to live happily in the world as it is. She wanted them to be "good," that went without saying; but she wasn't in the least anxious about their goodness, being convinced that happiness and goodness are the same thing. It had not occurred to her that while nominally accepting the Plainsburg theory of life, she might be actually—as Aunt Judith with compressed lips would have told her she was—undermining Plainsburg morality; undermining it far more successfully than a lonely and bewildered utopian such as Roger could ever do!

"Dancing!" he could hear Aunt Judith sniff. "Parading around with next to no clothes on! Devil's work! What can it lead to except godlessness and debauchery!" Aunt Judith knew that the proper way to take a bath was to do it in secret, and for the sake of cleanliness merely, and not more than once a week, so that there might be enough dirt to wash off to make it work instead of play. What, indeed, was this riotous exercise and display of healthy young men's and women's bodies except the pride of the eye and the lust of the flesh! Oh, even little Janet's graceful tumblings about in the lake would have shocked her, particularly as Mrs. March didn't feel it to be necessary for little Janet to be encumbered by a bathing-suit. But then, Mrs. March would have been shocked in turn by Aunt Judith's ideas. She would privately have considered them indecent and disgusting; aloud, she would mildly have dismissed them as "unenlightened."

This was the paradoxical fact, which entertained Roger while he disported himself with these boys and girls—that this play represented Mrs. March's idea of good morals. And perhaps she was right! Aunt Judith would have been accurate enough in calling it "the pride of the eye and the lust of the flesh": but the lust of the flesh had another meaning in this environment than the limited and ugly one it had in Aunt Judith's mind. These young people were not, like poor Aunt Judith, beset by emotions which they feared and hated. They knew what their bodies were for; and the immediate uses which they found for these bodies in such play as this, were apparently quite—and gloriously—sufficient for the moment.

It was precisely this worship of the flesh that kept them so young, and, to Roger's puzzled eyes, so strangely infantile for their years—so astonishingly and unmistakably, if outward behavior was any proof, innocent. What these youths might be, in the company of girls of a different class, toward whom their masculine conventions might require a different behavior, was another matter; Roger knew well enough what college youths were like in that respect—he had seen them trying to be wicked, and not being very successful at it, any more than he himself had been; and what struck him here was how successful they all were at being happy children!

They weren't even sentimental; or if they were, they concealed it from public observation. Those boys and girls who, as the days passed, seemed to be pretty constantly paired off—Barbara with one of the Wolf boys and Louis with one of the Vance girls, and, of course, Walter and Olga,—were more like two boys together, than like the traditional boy and girl. They were "pals"; they tinkered over motorboats together, or went out in canoes, or took auto-rides, with a gayety, a familiarity, and a zest in mere animal activity which seemed to show that no deep emotional springs in their natures had been touched by this companionship. Their quarrels were not lovers' quarrels, but the easily healed quarrels of comrades.

And yet they must have regarded this fondness for each other's company as, in some instances, "love"—for there were Walter and Olga wanting the world to know that they expected to be married. Of course, they would be married some day, to somebody; and if so, why not Olga to good old Walt, and Louis to his pal Rosalind!

Scott college, Roger knew, had a reputation as a match-making institution. It was quite the regular thing to find one's life companion there, and get married soon after graduation, and settle down, preferably in Scott Park, and live happily ever after. Mr. and Mrs. March had done it; these young people would do it. And this summer camp was also, in a sense, a matchmaking place. This was their kind of wooing. And, incredible as it might seem to Aunt Judith, these godless sports of theirs led simply and quietly to the altar and the cradle. They were merely the "enlightened" convention of this part of the world.

That was what inwardly piqued and amused Roger: that because these things *were* the convention, they were right and proper—and none of these young people would dream, apparently, of viewing them in any improper light. To a bookish youth from Plainsburg, with Rivoli Park, Fancyland and Stumble Inn for his further edification, this play of theirs seemed more than anything else like the pagan festivals of barbaric Greek tribes—or like some hope of Nietzsche's, come true most incongruously in the midst of a Puritan civilization! Roger even seemed to discover, in their unsentimental insensitiveness, a fulfillment of the Nietzschean injunction: "Be hard!"

He confessed to himself that he could not quite understand this contradiction. But he laid that to the fact that he had been reared in Plainsburg.

—And in and out between these musings, like an occasional red stab of pain, came the thought of Sally. He had had no more letters from her. Memories of Sally came hurtlingly, and grew dim, and faded, and all that part of his life again seemed unreal. . . .

5.

After the first few days the social discipline of which Roger had been the object appeared to relax, so as to permit these young people to go about their own independent concerns without determinedly including him. He was now perhaps considered to be a part of the camp and able to find his own amusements. Barbara faithfully continued his swimming-lessons, with encouraging success; and Ellen Iverson of the gorgeous hair kept on, with less conspicuous success, trying to teach him to play tennis. Without withdrawing himself from the camp activities, he managed to write to Sally almost every day. He had occasionally seen Mr. and Mrs. March reading; and, a little guiltily, he indulged himself in that same privilege. But still he had no chance for what he regarded as conversation.

On Saturday evening there was to be a party at the March bungalow; and Barbara and Olga appeared at dinner in pretty evening dresses of fluffy rose-pink chiffon and yellow organ-

die, with silk stockings to match, and dancing-pumps, hair elaborately curled and puffed—and even a touch of make-up! The contrast to the hoydens who had gone about all week in middie-blouses and bloomers and bathing-suits was to Roger rather startling.

After dinner the whole community of young people and their parents began to arrive; the wide doors were thrown open upon both porches, a phonograph was set on the table in the middle of the big living-room, and they danced. Roger was glad he had not been plunged at the beginning of his visit into such a scene; he would have feared and disliked these mannikins and dolls, as he would have regarded them. But now he found it delightful to watch them play at being grown-up. And if he had wondered all week long where was their consciousness that they belonged after all to different sexes, he was to find them to-night displaying a very pretty awareness of that distinction. They were, with scarcely a touch of awkwardness, with what seemed to him a perfect air of social sophistication, exhibiting all the traditional gallantries and coquetries of the sexes to which they belonged. They were actually flirting with each other; and with him, too. Roger was incredulous when he first saw Olga, the devoted of Walter, making eyes at himself; but after Barbara, while they were sitting out a dance on the steps, shyly but unmistakably invited and received a kiss from him, he ceased to doubt. And even little Ellen—who, being only sixteen, was too young to wear a “low”-necked frock—squeezed the hand of her tennis-pupil lingeringly by way of demonstrating that she was not a tom-boy to-night. And again a sense of the perfect propriety of these proceedings dawned humorously upon Roger; these were the ordained circumstances of flirtation. The formal occasion, the dressing-up, the publicity, constituted not merely the accessories, but the reason, the permission, and one might almost say the obligation to amorous dalliance; and within the limits naturally set by these circumstances, it was the right, the proper, the seemly thing to do! It was, as much as learning to swim or play tennis, a social and moral duty; while to neglect an occasion thus provided would be a kind of awkward dereliction. And so, with the same courage and self-confidence as when taking the first dive from the spring-board

into the blue waters of the lake, they adventured now boldly into the unknown. Why should they be afraid? Wasn't this what such parties were for, that young people might learn to enjoy gracefully and fearlessly those emotions which most of all make life beautiful! Aunt Judith would have been unable to believe that the very instincts which she regarded with such disgust were being really trained up to be a part of domestic peace and happiness. "Devil's work!" she would have said. "Dancing and kissing—no good can come of it!"

Roger's thoughts turned to little Janet. These were the conventions under which she was being brought up. What would she be like—at Sally's age? He wondered. She was six years old. In fifteen years she would be twenty-one. Fifteen years. That seemed a long time off. He would be thirty-seven then—middle-aged! But he would like to see Janet then.

She wouldn't be afraid, at all events; not afraid of anything. She would be accustomed to the truth. She would believe in herself. She would have as the foundation of her life a strong and lovely body for whose physical well-being she cared deeply. She wouldn't be sentimental; she would be rather hard—and a good thing, too. She wouldn't be a rebel. But, even within her conventions, she would be extraordinarily free and sane.

She wouldn't be like Sally. . . .

6.

It was midway of the next week that Roger had his first opportunity to talk with Mr. and Mrs. March.

Barbara, Louis, Herman and Walter Wolf and the Iverson girls had gone across the lake to Rosetta, to dance. Roger had been urged to go along, but he declined. He had memories of Rosetta which he did not wish to renew by revisiting those scenes. He remained at the bungalow. Janet had been put to bed, and he and Mr. and Mrs. March were alone on the big porch. The lamps were not lighted, but the moon was bright, and its cool radiance gave the scene a peace which he should have been loth to disturb. Mr. March was stretched at ease in a chaise-longue, finishing a cigar, and Mrs. March was sitting idly beside him. From the lake they could hear the lap-

ping of the water and the chugging of motor-boats and the gay cries and laughter of young people.

"Well, how do you like country life?"

Mr. March asked this question, quizzically, of Roger. He scarcely meant to start an argument; but within ten minutes he and Roger were arguing about morality. The transition between country life and morality might appear a violent one; but the transition in Roger's mind was the thought of Sally. And so it was that he replied to Mr. March's innocent question with smothered bitterness:

"It's like being out of a hateful and ugly world! It's going back to a childhood that I never had. But I can't forget that other world, the real world. I wish I could. But there it is, with all its cruelty. And what good does it do to go away from it like this? It's a blessed relief. But one goes back and finds it there just as one left it."

"You seem to think the world a pretty bad place," Mr. March commented mildly.

"Yes," said Roger. "I do."

"Why?"

It was in telling why that Roger got the discussion apparently—but only apparently—sidetracked upon the issue of conventional morality.

Mr. March interrupted him gently. "What do you mean by conventional morality?"

Roger explained that it was based on the medieval idea of living for heaven and not for earth.

Mr. March responded genially that he didn't know that *was* conventional morality; that when Roger described it as "medieval" he had sufficiently disposed of it; that he himself held no brief for the Spanish Inquisition; and he would like a modern instance of what Roger objected to.

"The conventional attitude toward women!" said Roger.

"And what is that?" Mr. March inquired.

The subject of the discussion may have chanced to be a little unusual, but the quality of the discussion made it no doubt identical with countless such discussions all over the world—the gentleness, the mellow wisdom, the kindly tolerance of the middle years in contrast with the rawness, sullenness, eagerness of youth. . . .

"The conventional attitude," said Roger, "is that women are either good or bad—either pure or impure; and that one kind ought to be revered, the other kind punished or degraded."

"I know the attitude you speak of," said Mr. March. "But is that the customary attitude to-day? I thought we had advanced a little beyond that."

Mrs. March murmured reflectively: "Let him that is without sin—"

"There is always some one," said Roger bitterly, "to cast the first stone; or the sinner is always convinced that there is. And death isn't the worst punishment!"

"Oh," said Mr. March, "no doubt very sad things do happen. The social group is still very harsh to those who break its rules; harsh particularly to men who violate the rules of property, and to women who violate the rules of sexual behavior. Undoubtedly the penalties in both instances are unduly severe. Still, it doesn't do any good to be emotional about such things; one must study their causes, and go to work in a practical way to change the causes which bring them about."

"But," Roger demanded, "which is really to blame, a society that makes impossible rules or the girl who breaks them?"

"I'm afraid," said Mr. March, "I'm not much concerned about settling abstract questions of right and wrong. Certainly I don't wish to undertake to revise the Decalogue. I only want people to behave sensibly. It may be foolish to break the rules that society has ordained—it often is; but it's still more foolish for society to punish such folly as if it were a crime. For its own sake, society must learn to be more tolerant. It comes down, in this case, to a question of children and of responsible parentage. It is foolish for a girl to bring into the world a child that hasn't the protection of regular married parentage. But society doesn't help things along by forcing the girl upon the streets. If that's what you mean, I quite agree with you that society is at fault. Punishment doesn't do any good; education is the only remedy. You happen," he went on, "to have touched on a subject that I'm interested in—if you exclude its metaphysical aspects. In practical terms, it is the problem of the unmarried mother. My attention was

first drawn to this problem by Professor Horton in his social science course at Scott. I took a post-graduate course there, and wrote a thesis on that subject. The statistics are very hard to get, owing to the lack of proper and uniform birth-registration in the different states. We're just beginning now to find out what the facts are. I've been instrumental in having the law amended in our own state so as to put the desired information at the service of the agencies that are at work on the problem. So I happen to know what is actually being done to remedy the situation."

The very calmness, the very sanity of this disquisition secretly infuriated Roger. Mr. March could sit there talking about statistics! It wasn't a living, aching, life-and-death matter to him. Of course not! His wife had the permission of "the social group" to have a baby. And Sally hadn't. But all was well, because a law had been amended so as to put the "desired information" at the service of the "proper agencies"!

Mr. March went on talking, and Roger listened impatiently to his sober account of the "progress made in this field." Mr. March was telling of various institutions in which unmarried mothers were sheltered, taught the proper care of their children, and, if need be, trained in some way of making a living. "The social attitude is gradually changing," said Mr. March.

Yes, Roger thought savagely—in a thousand years, or perhaps only a hundred, it will be changed! And that doubtless, ought to satisfy him. He would go back to White Falls and tell Sally:

"It's all right, dear—Mr. March says the social attitude is gradually changing!"

Mr. March was talking now about an institution which kept a record of what happened to the girls after they left its care; the record showed that most of them were later married, "to good husbands, who knew the girls' history."

Well, Roger reflected, then he hadn't been unique in his own attitude. That knowledge was comforting; it took away the tinge of quixotic folly from his offer to Sally, it made him seem more normal. One is glad to find oneself not too much unlike the rest of the human race. . . .

Mr. March was saying that the children who for some reason could not be cared for by those girls, and were left with

that institution, were all without exception adopted into good homes. "While the situation exists," said Mr. March, "and before it has been, as I think it can be, almost entirely eliminated by education, this is the way to deal with it."

But all this was still too remote—a kindly, meddlesome benevolence of the rich and educated toward the poor and ignorant. "Mr. March!" said Roger, "you tell me the social attitude is changing. Can you tell me *what* would happen if a girl in Scott college were to break this particular social commandment?"

Mr. and Mrs. March smiled at each other; and then Mr. March put aside the stub of his cigar, took another from his pocket, cut the point from it with great care, and sat looking at it for a long minute. Then he spoke.

"In a certain co-educational college," he said slowly, "in a middle-western town like White Falls, there occurred an interesting case that I happen to know all about. I think this case is rather instructive of what I would call a sensible attitude on the part of the social group. A college girl went away with her mother for a time, ostensibly because of a nervous breakdown; when they returned, the girl's mother had with her a baby boy, which she said she had adopted. The family soon moved to another state. In the meantime, for several months, the girl, while not returning to college, continued to take the same part as ever in the life of the community. Every one pretended to believe in the account of the baby's adoption, but no one could help guessing the truth, and those who were close to the family knew the whole story. Observe that no one undertook to punish the girl, humiliate her, ostracise her. They didn't regard her as a bad girl; they thought of her as foolish and unfortunate. She had been carrying on a secret romance with a soda-fountain clerk. Marriage with him was out of the question—not, as you perhaps might think, because he was a soda-fountain clerk, but because he showed himself to be a liar and a coward. Now, to finish the story, she is married to a good husband, and has taken back her child. That answers your question, I think!"

"It does," said Roger. "And it *is* instructive. But I kept wondering, as you were telling the story, *why* the kindly and elaborate hypocrisy of those arrangements? Why was it that

everybody pretended this and that? Why couldn't the girl have her baby in her home town, without sneaking away? Why couldn't her friends come to see her, bringing gifts and congratulations, as to any other mother! What was everybody ashamed of? You speak of it as her folly. But in just what did her folly consist? Not surely, in falling in love with a liar and a coward! A young man that her parents approved of might turn out to be a liar and a coward. The mere folly of falling in love with an unworthy person is common enough—that wasn't what everybody was ashamed of. Was it—please tell me if I'm wrong!—the fact that she surrendered to her emotions without first asking the consent of the social group?"

"I think you put it rather well," said Mr. March. "Human nature must learn to conform to social rules. You wouldn't, I take it, ask society to abandon all its rules because a few people are too impulsive to obey them?" He smiled.

"Perhaps not," said Roger. "But I find it a trifle grotesque that these profound questions of right and wrong all come down in the end to a mere matter of what the neighbors will stand for! Is that the new morality?"

"I wasn't aware that it was new!" said Mr. March, and rose. "I told you I wasn't interested in abstract questions of right and wrong. Shall we take a little stroll, and clear our brains of the fumes of nicotine and argument, before the children get back?"

They walked down to the lake. Through the low-tide stillness they could hear far-off cries and laughter, and the chugging of an approaching motor-boat.

"That's our bunch," said Mr. March. "You can hear Barbara laugh for miles."

Roger reflected to himself that these young people would not have to argue about such matters; they would never have to try, vainly, to discover life's happier possibilities by their own unaided and lonely efforts. These possibilities would have been opened up for them already. They could go ahead and live, confidently and gayly. . . .

But Sally? What was there for her?

7.

A second talk occurred on Saturday afternoon. It concerned, though Roger hardly realized it at the time, a plan of the Marches for his own personal career.

Mrs. March had seen the discontent in Roger's face. She had learned what there was to be learned of his history. She had thought about him, and talked about him to her husband. And their conclusion was that he suffered from baulked ambition.

Ambition, under the circumstances, was inevitably construed in academic terms. If Roger had been a poor boy who hadn't gone to college, they would have enabled him to go. Now it was assumed that he pined for higher scholastic honors. His brilliant academic career, and his interest in books, suggested the possibility of his being given an instructorship in the English department of Scott. Mr. March, as Roger afterward learned, had already suggested his name to the head of that department. The plan was, of course, still uncertain. What was certain was that Mr. March could have his way about such things in Scott college. In the meantime he wished to see Roger and judge for himself. Mrs. March, it would seem, had no doubts of Roger's fitness for the position. But he needed, she thought, some bringing out, of a healthy social sort; an intellectual and unsociable young man is in danger of becoming a boor, if he is not so already. And certainly nothing could have been better calculated to change Roger into a socially agreeable human being than the kind of life provided at Winga Bay.

But of all this Roger knew nothing when the discussion began which was to determine his career.

The discussion, this time, was started by Mr. March, who said something about college—something intended to provoke Roger's dissent. But the Winga Bay mood was upon Roger, now that he was about to go. It hardly seemed worth while to argue about college. He stated his opinions, lazily. Mr. March seemed much interested.

"There is a great deal of truth in what you say," he commented gravely. "College ought to make young people better able to deal with life than they were before."

And in this mood it merely amused Roger to hear his cynical opinions construed in this tame fashion. Mr. March seemed to insist upon regarding him as a fellow-liberal. "I suppose," Mr. March went on mildly, "that our economic teaching is rather out-of-date; and our history courses somewhat—provincial. But what about the teaching of English literature? What is wrong there?"

Roger, not knowing that he was undergoing an unofficial examination with regard to his fitness as an instructor in English, answered amiably:

"It's all wrong. Literature is taught as *belles lettres*. Its beauty is continually being pointed out; and beauty when pointed out becomes a bore. One must be left to discover beauty for one's self, according to one's capacity. The love of beauty can hardly be taught."

"Well—and what then? Let us agree that nothing is to be said about the beauty of Keats's Ode to the Nightingale. What is left to talk about? Grammar? Dates?"

Roger smiled. "Keats's grammar can be left to take care of itself," he said. "But dates *are* rather important, I think. The Ode to the Nightingale couldn't have been written in the eighteenth century. It really couldn't have been written before the French Revolution. Because—in the eighteenth century, people were looking forward to the future. Then the French Revolution came, and ushered in that future; and nobody liked it. So they turned back to the past. They turned away from the nineteenth century machine civilization with a shudder. They turned away from the actual world; they began to prefer to look through magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn. And there you have the history of the literature of the first half of the nineteenth century."

"H-m?" said Mr. March thoughtfully.

"Literature," added Roger, "is a sort of commentary on life. Books tell us what sensitive people have thought and felt about the world they lived in."

"So," said Mr. March, sitting up suddenly, "if you were teaching English, you'd change everything, go about it in an entirely new way? That would be interesting. I wonder how it would work out?"

"I'm afraid it wouldn't work out at all," said Roger, "so long as literature and history were separated, as they are now. English literature by itself is comparatively meaningless; just as English history by itself is. It's a question of world-literature and world-history. Some day, perhaps, a very great teacher will come along to smash our educational conventions and start things right."

"Perhaps," said Mr. March. "And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime," Roger laughed, "college is undoubtedly a very good place to learn to play games. I'm sorry I wasted my opportunities! But any one who wants to learn to think—shouldn't go to college." He wasn't arguing; he wasn't heated and impatient; and this unwonted calm lent a certain force to his statement.

"Do you really feel that way about it?" asked Mr. March.

"I feel," said Roger, "that I have lost four good years of life. I wish I were back at the age when I left Plainsburg. Knowing what I do about college, I'd stay away."

Mrs. March, who had been silent, now addressed him. "But you *aren't* that age," she said, "you're older and wiser. And perhaps you have learned more than you think in those four years. Don't you agree that we must deal with things as they are? The college is here. What can be done to help it?—isn't that the right attitude?"

She had not given up her plans for him. And her argument provided a simple and easy solution of all his objections. But the phrase, "things as they are," brought the thought of Sally sharply into his mind. . . .

"That doubtless is the right attitude," he agreed. "Only it doesn't happen to be my attitude. Colleges are part of the world as it is; but I happen to dislike the world as it is. That's childish, no doubt; but it's true. You are being sensible; I'm glad of it. But I can't be, I'm afraid. I can't be reconciled even to so well-meaning and comparatively harmless an institution as college."

He hardly could have said that without some unconscious knowledge of what he was refusing, it would seem. And yet, when Mr. and Mrs. March looked at each other, confused and amused at being thus rebuffed,—in that exchange of glances he had his first conscious inkling of what was up. If he had

definitely realized that he was being questioned with a view of being offered an instructorship, he would at least have found some more tactful and reasonable way of declining it. Or—who knows?—he might have accepted it, after all. . . .

"Well!" said Mr. March, laughing quietly, "there seems to be no more to say!"

Roger hastily turned to conversation in another direction, at the same time trying to make a sort of apology for his rudeness. "The generation to which I belong," he said slowly, is full of hatreds and fears. It can't deal with things as they are with a clear vision. It's so busy in getting away from the old that it can't adjust itself to the partly new. I'm busy getting away from Plainsburg. That's why it's so hard for me to understand these boys and girls that I see here—they seem so utterly uncomplicated by any past, such as I have to bother with."

"No," said Mrs. March, earnestly, "they're not so uncomplicated with the past as you might think. No—Roj—they're more like you than you suppose. So far as having to struggle with the past goes. If—if you had seen Louis a year ago; unhappy—the unhappiest boy I ever knew!"

In Roger's mind a flash of uncertain memory suddenly connected Louis with the boy of whom Jack had spoken a year ago—the former companion of Jack's Rivoli Park and Fancyland and Stumble Inn adventures. Louis Todd! The same boy? Perhaps not; but the surmise gave a meaning to what Mrs. March was saying.

"Or Barbara," she went on; "if you had seen her at sixteen—just out of the kind of home that I'm afraid you were acquainted with back in Plainsburg—a wild, unhappy girl. What you see now is what a few years of healthy and sensible living has made of her. It's a pity we can't forget the past entirely, and start out all new, isn't it? I'm sorry you're going away with your head still full of—of hatred for Plainsburg. You must come and see us often."

Roger thanked her, gratefully. And then he said: "Forgetting—that doesn't work. It's bad even to try. But starting out all new—if *we* can't, there's always the younger generation. I wonder what it will be like!"

Mr. March laughed, and said, "There's the younger generation!" as little Janet came running up to the porch.

"Pen!" she called to her mother, pulling at the screen door. "The boys wouldn't let me ride on the round-swing!"

"That was too bad of them," said her father.

But Mrs. March, knowing her daughter better, asked: "And what did you do?"

"I pulled them off," said Janet. "And Jimmie's gone home with his nose bleeding. I just thought I'd tell you about it! He says he won't play with me any more. Pen, do you think he won't?"

"What do you think, Janet?"

"I think he will!" said Janet, smiling.

8.

There was another party Saturday night, at the Iversons', and Roger danced, drank fruit punch, was coquetted with by the girls, and wished he belonged there. . . .

He wished that all the more now when his departure impended, and he had begun to be oppressed again with the problem of life as it was lived in White Falls—a life of desperate hopes and fears.

Sunday afternoon he said good-by, kissed little Janet's cheek, and went away.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Dreams and Dreamers

I.

WHEN he came back to White Falls Sunday afternoon, there was a message at his boarding-house to call up Mrs. Patterson.

He hurried instead to her house, half knowing what news he had to face, but fearfully pushing that knowledge back into the corners of his mind. He tried not to think about Sally; and in that effort a foolish phrase out of his talk with Mr. March came into his mind, and said itself over and over like an incantation: "The social attitude is gradually changing. . . ."

Once he stopped short and cried aloud, "No!"—to a fear that he would not put into words.

At the door, a sudden weakness kept him for a moment from turning the knob. And as he stood there, a picture came into his mind of Sally, as he had first seen her—first believed in her. He saw again in memory that slim girl with strange-colored tawny hair and restless movements. Again he heard her laughter ring out, clear and gay, a bubbling of the springs of joy, a chiming of the bells of pleasure. She was the embodiment of careless young happiness. No one who had ever been troubled by doubts or fears could laugh that soft, delicious, careless laughter of hers! He felt again the breathless, overwhelmed impression he had had, that this was still a world of nymphs, of dryads, of bacchantes, of glad pagan revelers. . . . He turned the knob of the door.

There was a sound of crying from the parlor; and entering, he saw, clustered about, sitting and standing, the boarders—with Ma Patterson in their midst, in her favorite rocker, rocking and sobbing. The middle-aged ingénue from the repertoire company stood leaning over her, arms about her, swaying to the rocker's rhythm, and saying over and over, "You mustn't take on so, dearie!"

Roger's heart knew the truth already, but he stood there with a mind stupidly blank and uncomprehending. . . . The woman who worked on one of the newspapers and wrote poetry was saying to one of the cabaret-singers: "It seems just like yesterday that I saw her, alive and happy, in the pretty new dress she bought for her trip. She tried it on, and came running into my room to show it to me. It was a sage-green Shantung silk, trimmed with soutache braid—"

Roger turned with a blind stubborn incredulity to the lecturer, who was standing nervously by the door taking out a handkerchief from his breast-pocket, unfolding it, folding it again, and putting it back in his pocket.

"What has happened?" Roger demanded.

The lecturer took out his handkerchief. "Don't you know?" he said. "It's Sally—she was drowned last night in Otter Lake." He refolded the handkerchief and put it back in his pocket. "The boat tipped over, and she never came up. They're dragging the lake for the body."

Roger turned and ran from the room.

2.

The funeral was on Tuesday. Roger wanted not to go. It was bad enough to have to look into the coffin in Ma Patterson's parlor, and see, blooming in death with all the undertaker's art, the cold mockery of Sally's living beauty. But to hear vain words said over that body—he would have escaped that ordeal if he could. But it would have been unkind. The others, his fellow-boarders, who seemed to him to be gloating over the prospect of these funeral rites, would not have understood. Nor would Sally's mother. She came to him and said, "You were one of Sally's best friends, one of her best *real* friends—and I told Peter I thought you ought to be one of the pallbearers." It was a favor to him, and he knew of no way to resign that ghastly office.

He rode to church with the other pallbearers, in a special cab. One of his companions was the lecturer. Another was the little man who played comedy parts in the repertoire company and was said to be especially good in drunken scenes. The others were youths whom he did not remember ever hav-

ing seen. Sally's friends they all were, nevertheless; and he could have respected their grief, except that one of them kept talking about how lifelike she looked in the coffin, and another, the comedian, kept dwelling upon the way she had looked before the undertaker had gone to work. "You wouldn't have known her," he said, "her face was altogether different. Seemed like somebody else—so peaked, and the eyes staring wide open." Yet he *was* her friend; he had gone to Otter Lake to try to help—and Roger hadn't.

He—he hadn't done anything. When she was alive, he hadn't done anything. He had only sat on a comfortable screened porch at Winga Bay, and discussed Sally in the abstract. Why hadn't he gone to Springhaven? This wouldn't have happened. No, it couldn't have happened. An accident, they said. And so he himself had tried to think. But he heard that horrified whisper ring through his mind: "*I'd kill myself!*" He had heard her say that, and still he had gone away and left her. He had written to her—vague, discreet demands for news of herself, and long descriptions of the jollities of Winga Bay. And she, alone, friendless—for he was no true friend—helpless, frightened, in a world whose cruelties she knew too well, had been able to think of no other solution than this. . . .

They entered the church, and were ushered solemnly to their pews. Ma Patterson, in a black silk dress, and hardly recognizable without her apron, was in a pew in front; and beside her that little man, Peter-Pat, Sally's uncle—looking bewildered and awed. In another pew Roger saw some of his fellow-boarders, and the ingénue who had been trying to stop Ma Patterson's tears the other day was sitting with tears running down her own cheeks. The air was heavy with the perfume of tuberoses. The coffin, a slim white thing, stood in view. There was music from the organ. The minister rose. He was Dr. Deckerman. His sermonic voice was resonant and impressive, and he rang out the changes on it. "Dearly beloved," he began, "we have come together upon the most solemn of all earthly occasions. . . ."

Roger ceased to listen. Why hadn't he stayed in White Falls with her? What curse of selfishness had made him shirk the burden of those last two weeks? It had seemed to him

that he wasn't of any use to her. She wouldn't let him talk about the only thing that really mattered. But why hadn't he broken through that barrier of silence? What was he thinking of, to go off to Winga Bay and leave her alone? Why had he been so stupid? Any one, any one in the world except himself, would have known, would have done something. . . .

And now that it was for ever too late, he must see all that he hadn't seen before. He had never supposed she meant what she said. He had been shocked at the idea, at the phrase. In the world in which he lived, such things weren't really done. Only in antiquated story-books. Yet, after all, he was living in the same world with Mr. March—in a world of amiable intentions and the illusions of progress. What was that phrase he had smiled at so cynically as they sat talking on the porch at Winga Bay? *The social attitude is gradually changing.* He had been indignant to think that Mr. March's philosophy had only that meager consolation to offer. And yet he had already accepted that consolation, had believed in it implicitly, had relied upon it to keep Sally from doing—this. That belief had held him serenely discussing Sally in the abstract at Winga Bay, while Sally in living tormented reality only a few miles away had been brooding upon death as her only escape. . . .

How, he wondered darkly, does one decide for death. It must seem beautiful, before the body's cry for life could be hushed! Or did the body still cry out for life, with only the stern dark will intent on death? Was there ever any real decision between life and death, or only an impulsive despairing gesture that was somehow real? Roger had speculated on suicide before, in the clear air of logic. Now it was the life, the laughter, the joyous young body of Sally that he thought of. It couldn't be true—life wasn't so terrible that a girl like Sally would deliberately prefer to die. . . . No!

And he began to be angry at her. Yes, sitting there in his pew at poor Sally's funeral, he was angry at her. How had she dared make that criticism of life, of all her friends, of him? She had been wrong, wrong. There was no need for it. Life wasn't so terrible. "Oh, Sally, if you had only waited—" If— *If!* But she was dead. She lay there in her coffin, the joy extinguished, the laughter stilled. . . . "Forgive us, Sally!"

That dead clay there in the coffin had been only a little while ago alive—it had been beauty, and hope, and lovely movement, and laughter. It had been an eager demand for a world fit to live in. And in it there had been a fear, a childish fear that turned toward death. If they had known that, how they would have all striven to make the world seem more beautiful and gracious, how they would have coaxed this lovely girl to stay! “Would we? But this is what we *did*. This.” He, too. No! He had not done this. He had been ignorant, foolish, helpless, unthinking. But he had been on her side. It was not he, it was— Who? Everybody else, perhaps; but not he. Not he. And even if all the world was against her, wasn’t he enough to keep her from hurt? “Didn’t you think I meant what I said, Sally?” Oh, if only she had been a little braver! But perhaps he meant very little to her, after all—when her fairy tale was spoiled. She hadn’t been in love with the reality of him—only with her dream. Her dream. Her dream of herself, too. She had been in love with that. She had been ashamed of her real self. She had thought that real self only fit to die. . . .

The sickly-sweet odor of the tuberose assailed him, and he heard the cadenced voice of the minister: “This pure young life, so untimely brought to its end here on earth, will have its fulfillment in heaven. Let us, in our bereavement, find consolation in that sure knowledge. . . .”

How could he judge her? Who could know what she had suffered in giving up her dream of herself? Who could know how terribly she had struggled, how bitterly she had failed? She was beyond judgment; beyond all but pity, now. . . . No; not beyond judgment. Not beyond his. Bursting painfully from his heart there came the thought of her child, the child that never was to be. “Coward!” he thought. “Couldn’t you have had a little faith?” Was the thought of having a child so meaningless, or terrible, that it did not count against her wish to die? Wasn’t being a woman anything to her? Couldn’t she trust her body? No, she was afraid of her body, afraid of life. . . . And that was why he judged her, even at this hour. Not even in death could she escape his judgment. That coffin, in which she rested with such a pitiful mockery of the bloom of life upon her, was no refuge from his scorn.

She was like that in life—a lie, a sham, a fraud, she seemed to live, but it was as false a seeming as the undertaker's cosmetics that adorned her now. She was afraid, afraid, afraid! . . . "Sally, forgive me! You would not understand." No, in life she had not understood his reproaches, any more than now in death. She had been hurt by his words, and she had not understood. If she had lived, his words would still have hurt her. That was why she had died, perhaps, so as not to suffer the pain of trying to understand life. . . .

He would have had her as brave as she was lovely—utterly unafraid of life. They could have stood together against the world! . . . But why should he reproach her, why did he hurl these angry thoughts at that dead clay of hers? "But you—why did you promise so much?" Yes, why had she come with the false promise of her eager body and her careless laughter, with the promise of joyous and triumphant life, if she was afraid to live? Why had she come, bringing to him the hope of a brave and laughing happiness? He, too, had cherished a vain dream. And now he knew what it was to have such a dream killed. "Go, then, and take my dead dream with you into the ground."

The organ-music throbbed through the church, and presently with the others Roger was bearing the pall to the hearse. And then he and his fellows were shut into their cab, and were driven through the environs of White Falls and into a place of gravestones, where there was a grave newly dug. Again the minister's voice . . . and then the coffin was lowered into the grave. . . .

"Yes," he thought, "take my foolish dream away with you, Sally, and let it rest with yours in the peace of the grave. Dreams are as false as life, and only death is true. Forgive me my reproaches, Sally, for now I know why you made your choice. It was a good choice, and if I were as brave as you I should do what you have done."

The first clods fell on the coffin, and they turned away. Ma Patterson came up to him, and he put his arm around her and patted her shoulder. "She was so sweet," said Sally's mother, "and so good—" She started to cry again.

"Yes—yes—" said Roger.

3.

He hurried away as soon as he could. He packed his things, quit the store, and left town.

It happened that he went to Chicago.

He sat on the lake-shore, day after day, and looked at the waves, finding some strange comfort in their movement. He sat thus, until his money was gone, and until a thought came to him that made him in some sort reconciled to life; and then he went and found a place to work, in a second-hand book store.

4.

The thought that came to him was the thought of Janet.

He remembered that last talk with her father and mother at Winga Bay. . . . "The generation to which I belong," he had said, "is full of hatreds and fears. We can't deal with things as they are with a clear vision." And Janet's mother had said, "It's a pity we can't start all new." And he: "If we can't, there's always the younger generation. I wonder what it will be like?"

Then Mr. March, laughing: "*There's* the younger generation"—as little Janet came running up to the porch. . . .

Janet—the younger generation—a generation that would start out all new, that would have no past to forget; a generation that would be, whatever it was, different.

He thought of Sally; and he said: "Janet will not be like that."

He hugged the thought to his breast like a talisman, and it healed the madness in his heart.

Book Three: Janet Herself

CHAPTER ONE: The Drama of Childhood

I.

WHEN Janet was six years old, her mother was going to have another baby. Janet was taken into her mother's confidence, and was very proud of her knowledge. In the latter months of the pregnancy, Janet was permitted to put her hand against her mother's side and feel the strange flutterings, which presently became kicks, abrupt and visible. "It's so active, the doctor says it's probably a boy," said Penelope. "How would you like to have a little brother, Janet?"

"I'd love him!" said Janet.

She and her mother sat there silent and dreamy-eyed, both thinking of the boy-child that was to be born; Janet dreaming of a little brother to help and protect, and Penelope of a son that should heal the old aching wound in her memories—and in Brad's.

When the new baby was born, the baby brother for whom she had hoped, Janet found herself suddenly left out—shut out.

2.

Penelope had wanted to name the baby Bradford, so wholly did she identify him with the beautiful boy who had died. But her husband was, in spite of himself, and more than he was aware, superstitious. He was afraid to give this child that name. And he had been, since his father's funeral, filled with an obscure remorse. He wished that he had not denied his father that last wish. And it was as a kind of appeasement to a sense of guilt that he decided to name his son Andrew.

In not giving his son his own name, Bradford was in some odd way punishing himself; it was as if he were thereby deny-

ing himself the natural satisfaction of believing that he had been born again in a more perfect mold. And, still more oddly, he was doing this for his son's sake. He dared not wish for this child what he had so vainly wished before—dared not even love his son as he had loved before.

These feelings did not take shape as thoughts, to be examined, criticized, rejected; they were strange moods, to be ashamed of and forgotten.

He forgot them; and soon he and little Janet had become greater companions than ever. That was only natural, since Penelope was so much taken up with her little son.

But Janet felt something in her father's attitude toward the baby that he himself was not aware of. She felt the tug of his love toward her brother—away from herself. And she fought to keep his love. She wanted to make herself so much a part of his life that her brother could never take her place.

Childhood love is sometimes a secret and devious passion. One has rivals; and one has to preserve one's self-respect. All the more because one is passionately desirous of being the only adored, it is necessary not to seem to claim an exclusive affection! When Brad came home, he wanted to play with the baby. And after dinner, when the baby had been put to bed, he might want to sit and talk with Pen. This was most likely to be true in winter, in Scott Park. Janet's father had learned to play in summer; but in winter he wanted to sit by the fire and talk. So Janet played outdoors with the other children, sliding down hill on bob-sleds, or skating on the river. There was an irregular sort of gang with which Janet went. Janet did not care for dolls. She preferred to run with the boys. She was anxious to show that she had as much stamina as any boy.

She became something of a tomboy. She was scolded for feats that were beyond a girl's capacity. And because Jimmy—her partner in one of these feats, swimming two miles to Rinebeck's Pier, one summer in her eleventh year—because he wouldn't stand up for her rights, because he admitted he ought to have known better than to let her, she never forgave him. . . . Janet always was proud of her boyish recklessness, always brought her reckless achievements to her father's notice.

A jealous world, this of childhood. Now, more than ever in later life, one must love and be loved! It is only later that one will learn how to gain love—and how to do without it if needs be.

Janet, the healthy young animal—Janet the tomboy—Janet splashing in the water, leaping on the sand, racing across the tennis-court, climbing trees, managing a sailboat,—in town, at school, listless at her desk, walking home with her own crowd of giggling girls,—at parties, dancing, pretending to be grown up—these were aspects of her that anybody could see. But there was another Janet—the Janet that spent every possible hour with her father—his comrade, his servant, his slave. This was Janet in love, trying to keep her king and master from noticing that there was a boy in the family.

Her struggle—that is to say, her happy companionship with her father—lasted till her sixteenth year.

3.

Janet, sixteen years old, was out fishing with her father. It was Sunday morning. The sun was very hot. She sat very quietly in the boat.

Her father only fished on Sunday morning. And Janet, every summer since she was ten years old, had gone along with him. They started early in the morning. He would come to the hammock where she slept, and wake her up, saying, "Come on, Janet, let's catch the fish for breakfast!" It would be barely daylight.

She would dress as quickly as she could and hurry down to the boat after him. He was all ready with fishing tackle and bait. She climbed in, pushed the boat off with an oar, and started to row—quietly, so as not to scare the fish. When they reached the part of the lake where the pickerel fed, she had to be even more quiet. The boat moved slowly, impelled by a silent dip of her oars, while her father's line dragged behind the boat; trolling, it was called.

She had started up wide-awake and eager. But presently she became sleepy. If she might only move, she could stay awake better. But she had to sit still. . . . The sleepiness lasted only a little while. Then she became cold. . . . And

the coldness lasted only a little while, for the sun rose higher and its rays warmed her. Then she became hungry. The hungry feeling stayed.

They would be there fishing until eleven o'clock, when everybody came out for the morning swim. But there wouldn't be anything to eat till one o'clock. That was just his joke, what her father said about catching the fish for breakfast. There wouldn't be any breakfast, for them.

Of course, she didn't have to go without breakfast. She didn't have to go with her father. One of the older boys or girls—always, at Winga Bay, there was some boy or girl from Scott college staying with them for the summer—one of these would have volunteered to go with her father. They used to go with him, before Janet insisted on going herself.

She went because she wanted to. She didn't mind—very much—doing without breakfast. She wanted to be with him. But it was hard to keep so quiet. If she made a splash, her father would look at her reproachfully. Sometimes she forgot, and commenced to say something out loud—something that had just come into her mind and that she wanted to tell him; and then he would say, "You're scaring the fish." He was probably disgusted with her, though he said very little. Sometimes, when she was very forgetful, he would ask: "Getting tired? Want to go home?" He asked it in a kindly tone, but it made her very much ashamed. She would shake her head, shut her teeth and stay.

As the sun rose higher, it became hotter. Her neck burned, and her head felt queer. She wondered if she were going to have a sunstroke—and sometimes she wished she would, so that her father would feel sorry for her. She wondered what he would do if she fainted. And then she felt ashamed of herself for thinking of such a ridiculous thing. She couldn't faint. She was too strong and healthy. And her father was proud of her for being so strong and healthy. She wasn't like a girl. It was just as if she were his son. What did anything else matter?

To-day it was very hot. She looked at the sun, and then shut her eyes, and the sun became a black spot that grew larger inside her tight eyelids until it seemed to fill her brain. Her head felt as though it would burst. She opened her

eyes, and automatically dipped silent oars. Her father was intent on his cork. Now it was bobbing—and in a moment he had jerked a pickerel, a big one! out of the water. He looked at her, holding it up for her to see, before he strung it on the cord with the rest of the morning's catch. He smiled, and she smiled back. Then he bent over his hook, putting on fresh bait.

Father and daughter—a charming sight to any one at such a moment. Janet, tall for her age, with serious dark eyes, disheveled black bobbed hair, face brown as an Indian's, with square shoulders and muscles that rippled in her brown arms, bare above rolled-up middie-sleeves; not pretty—but perhaps beautiful.

She noted her father's catch; good enough to satisfy him for a morning's fishing. She glanced at the sun, to see how high it was; nearly eleven o'clock, perhaps not quite that.

She shut her eyes again upon the huge black disc that filled her brain to bursting; then opened her eyes, and tried to think of something else. She thought about dinner, first; she was awfully hungry. Then she thought about last night, and the dancing. She had worn her blue organdie frock; it was really becoming to her, she decided again. She reflected with satisfaction that any one who didn't know her would take her for seventeen—or even eighteen. She reflected with less satisfaction upon her hair—it was bobbed, and gave her dead away as a kid. She must tell Pen she was going to let it grow. It would look awful for a while—but in a year there would be enough of it to put up. . . . And then she remembered a picture of Mrs. Vernon Castle, with short hair. One of the girls at prep said that she had heard they were beginning to wear it short in New York—it was going to be the fashion. Perhaps she'd better not let it grow, after all. . . .

The date of these reflections was July, 1915. For a year the world had been at war, and already it was beginning to be feared that the United States would become involved. But these were matters which were discussed in the current topics class at prep—and endlessly by everybody else all the time. They formed no part of her free meditations.

A snatch of tune from last night's dancing came into her head, and before she knew it she was humming "So Long,

Letty" under her breath. She stopped, and looked up at her father; but, intent upon a just-caught pickerel, he had not noticed.

That ought to be enough fish; and by the sun it was past eleven o'clock.

"I guess we'd better go back now, Janet," her father said. She turned the boat toward shore, and rowed hard. She was hungry—not for breakfast any longer, but for dinner.

Now she could talk. But now she didn't need to talk. She looked at her father's catch a little proudly. She had helped him. She looked at him, wistfully. In his shabby corduroys, with an old battered felt hat on his head, and in an old flannel shirt open at the neck, and his face with its morning grizzle still untouched by the razor, he seemed to her to be at his handsomest—perhaps because now he was her very own.

He looked young, she thought; younger than ever in the last few years, since he had stopped wearing a beard. No one would think he was—as old as he was. It seemed old in figures. But it really wasn't.

Then her thoughts turned to Bud. (Nobody ever called him Andrew.) Bud was only ten. By the time Bud was sixteen, Brad would be—much older. Really old. She felt a little sorry for Bud. Of course—*she* had gone fishing with her father when she was only ten. Bud could, too, if he wanted to. But he'd rather lie and sleep on Sunday morning. Anyway, this was her job.

And this fall . . . (she had saved this to the last for thinking about, because it was the nicest thought she had . . .) Brad and Dave and some of the others, a dozen altogether, were going up north for a *real* fishing trip, with canoes and packs and Indian guides and portages and wilderness; and she was going along! It was a man's party; the women were staying at home. Dave Tucker and his sons, Martin and Jim; Loo Vance and his oldest son, Leonard; Carl Wolf and his sons, Herman and Walter. Pete Iverson didn't have any son to take. And Brad was taking her.

He hadn't said so—exactly. She had listened to him and Dave talking about it, and discussing whether Ernie was old enough to go. Ernie was only fourteen. And finally she had said, "I'm sixteen, Brad!" And he had laughed, and pulled

her down on his knee, and tousled her hair, and said: "You rascal!" That was all—but of course he *would* take her.

They passed by the swimming place as they drew in to shore. There were voices and laughter, and then they saw the bathers. Janet could distinguish her mother among the rest, waving a hand to them. She waved back. Then came a call: "Hoo-hoo! Brad!" It was Bud, standing on the spring-board, ready to dive. As they looked, he shot into the air, turned a summersault, and hit the water neatly. Janet looked at her father's face. He was frowning. She wondered why.

They rounded the bend. Her father spoke. "I'm glad Bud's so young," he said, as if to himself.

"Why?" Janet asked eagerly.

He did not speak for a moment, and then what he said was: "This war may last a long time."

Janet thought that over. Then she said, with lifted chin, "I'd like to have a chance to fight the Huns!"

Her father looked at her and smiled crookedly. "I'm glad you're not a boy, just the same," he said.

He continued to look at her, and Janet for some reason felt embarrassed.

Bradford March, looking at his daughter, was realizing—as fathers do abruptly realize—that she was growing up. Sixteen—almost a woman.

And Bud, too—he would be a man before any one had time to realize it. Going to college. And—no, the war couldn't last *that* long, thank heaven!

Bradford March began to think of certain stocks and bonds: invested in on his brother John's advice some years before, they had suddenly begun to rise in value—for they represented steel and iron. The possession of those stocks and bonds made Bradford March uncomfortable. Seeing his boy, and thinking of the boys who were being killed with that steel and iron, he couldn't take pleasure in his increased dividends. He supposed he was a fool—but he was going to sell those damned things. . . .

Janet, bent over her oars, was smitten with thoughts of dinner—still so far away. She pushed the boat in to land, hurried over to the swimming place, and put on her bathing-suit. At any rate, she would have a gorgeous appetite!

Pen had come out of the pool, and was dressing in the next booth. Janet could hear her. And then her father came up outside. "Pen?" he called.—"Ready in one minute," she answered.—"Fine string of fish," he told her. She went out, and they stood talking in front of the dressing-booths.

There was a tiny mirror in Janet's booth, and light came in through the high little window. She was looking in the mirror trying with half-closed eyes to imagine that her low-cut bathing-suit was an evening frock, and wondering how bobbed hair would look with it. She couldn't quite work out the problem, because her bathing-suit, low-cut though it might be, was obviously *not* an evening frock; and Janet was a realist. However, she would not be allowed to wear a real evening frock for years yet, so there was plenty of time to decide about her hair.

—Her own name spoken called her attention to the conversation outside. They were talking about her.

"You were right about Janet," her father was saying.

She listened, guiltily. She felt like a person in a story. They listened, in stories, and heard things they weren't meant to hear—things that broke their hearts. And it served them right, too, for eavesdropping.

With her hand on her heart, she listened.

"I don't know why I should have taken the idea seriously," her father was saying. "Except that she wanted to, so much. But it really wouldn't do."

What wouldn't do?

"And I was thinking a great deal to-day," he went on, "about Bud."

He had been thinking a great deal to-day about Bud. . . . Well, it served her right to hear that. Nevertheless, she caught her breath with the hurting realization that all the time she had been helping her father to-day, he had been thinking about . . . somebody else. Not about her. . . .

"I thought—well, I've thought a lot of things about Bud lately," said her father. "But never mind about that. The thing I'm bothering about just now is—how to be with him more . . . while I can. He's growing up, and—well, you understand. I've been wondering what I could give him—that he'd want. And—he hasn't said anything about it, but

I guess he'd like mighty well to go on that trip with us. Dave thinks that even George and Ernie aren't quite big enough to take along. But I don't care—I'd like Bud to go. And that would be a reason Janet could understand for leaving her at home."

Oh! So that was it. . . .

Janet stopped listening. . . . But, oddly enough, it didn't seem to hurt at all. It was as if she had always known that this was going to happen. . . .

She waited, hardly breathing, until they had gone.

Her father would come out next Sunday morning, and shake the hammock, and say, "Come on, let's catch the fish for breakfast!" And she would say coolly, "You'd better take Bud."

No, that wouldn't do. That would be a dead give-away. She mustn't let anybody know that she cared. She would go to Bud and tell him that it was too hard on her to get up that way on Sunday morning—well, even if it did sound funny coming from her, she could say it just the same. "I need my beauty-sleep," she could say. "Why don't you take my place, Bud? Besides, I'm tired of being called a tomboy. And you're his son—"

She came out, more quietly than usual, to the swimming place, passing the Wolf boys and Olga and Ellen Iverson on their way to dress. They shouted a welcome to her, but she did not shout back. Eva and Jim and Edgar were all that were left in the pool—and Ron Walker, the boy who was spending the summer with Brad and Pen. Ron was seventeen, and thought himself very grown up. His eyes were on Janet lazily as she mounted to the springboard. She summersaulted into the water, came up beside him, and ducked him unexpectedly, so that he emerged spluttering. "Darn you!" he said, and swam after her. She swam away, looking back and smiling.

What she thought was: "It serves me right, all right! Well—I'll never let myself in for this sort of thing again!"

She didn't mean that she would never listen again to what she wasn't meant to hear. She meant that she would never again in her whole life let herself care for anybody—never.

CHAPTER Two: Growing Up

I.

JANET had decided not to go back to prep next fall. Instead, she was going to St. Pierre high school. She had gone to prep because it was assumed that she was going to Scott college. She had changed her mind about that, too; but she hadn't told Pen and Brad—it would hurt their feelings, and there was plenty of time ahead to introduce the subject of the State U. In the meantime it was sufficient to announce her immediate change of plans.

Her father and mother had failed to guess what was troubling her; all summer she had been aloof from them; but they did not want to pry into her states of mind, which were after all doubtless merely symptoms of the process of growing up. There was no good reason why she shouldn't go to high school instead of prep, if she wanted to.

Going to high school in St. Pierre instead of to prep in Scott Park was for Janet a kind of preliminary and partial separation from her family; a separation that would be made more complete when she went to the State U. and lived in a sorority house in White Falls, and only came home week-ends. When she had finished college she was going to leave home and go to Chicago to earn her living. She had her life all planned, for years ahead. She wasn't going to marry, at least for many years—not until she was thirty. She had decided that she did not care much for men. She was going to devote her life to some serious purpose—perhaps teaching. She had never been exceptionally good in her studies, but now she was going to be different.

She had done a great deal of thinking that summer. She lay awake for hours at night working things out in her mind. She also commenced to keep a diary. One of her complaints against their place here in Winga Bay—a new complaint,

undreamed of before—was its lack of personal privacy. It was impossible to write down one's most secret thoughts at a table in the big living-room, with anybody and everybody around. She had to go out to a remote part of the beach by herself every day, to write in her diary. This diary occasioned her much embarrassment; she knew that neither Pen nor Brad would ever look in it, but she wasn't sure of Bud—he might think it was a joke to read his sister's diary. So, after a few days in which she hid it among her clothes in a bureau, she destroyed all she had written, and suddenly announced that she was going to business college that summer. It was this business college venture that had made her parents aware of some disturbance in her mind. They had let her go, of course; but after three weeks she had suddenly quit. Evidently she was restless. They didn't know that in those three weeks she had learned enough shorthand to be able to put down, rather slowly and laboriously, in hooks and curves, such thoughts as were too private for the ordinary alphabet. After that, she kept her diary without fear of any curious eyes whatever. It was hard enough for her to read her own shorthand; she was sure nobody else could.

Among the matters that she considered at length in her midnight thoughts, and commented upon in her diary, partly in her own sprawling handwriting and partly in painfully neat shorthand, was this question of marriage. "I don't think I really like boys," she wrote. "I am not like other girls. Mona Iverson is crazy about Martin Tucker. Lucy Wolf is going to marry Leonard Vance this fall. They are older of course. But Eve is younger than I and she likes all the boys. I rather dislike them all especially Jim Tucker who is always hanging around."

Again she wrote: "People get married very young. Barbara and Herman Wolf. Walter and Olga Wolf. Margaret and Louis Todd. And Ray and Ned Lawrence. They have all got married in the last few years. I was a flower-girl at Barbara's wedding. I think it is a mistake to marry too young. I suppose they were in love and could not wait. Probably I shall not marry for love. I have a rather cold nature. But I wish to have children. I shall not be an old maid like Cousin

Harriet Royce or Cousin Margaret Royce. But I shall choose my mate after calm reflection and not in the haste of passion." The last sentence, among others, was written in shorthand.

Again: "I do not believe in kissing. And this is not because I am lacking in experience. I have been kissed more times than I can remember. Possibly twenty times. I am not counting the kisses of parents nor childish kisses but only the experiences of the last year. I am almost always kissed at Saturday night dances generally by Jim who is in love with me but sometimes by others including Ron Walker. It is impossible to escape being kissed by somebody though I never kiss back. There is no harm in it I suppose and most people seem to like it. No doubt I am rather Puritanical. I really would rather not but I am glad I have had the experience. Opinions should always be based on experience, I think."

Still another passage ran: "I wish to be useful to the world and not an idler like Uncle Edward. He makes me feel ashamed. I think he dyes his hair black. He is older than Brad and his is beginning to have gray in it. Even Aunt Dolly is rather a useless person and I understand that she has brought up Cousin Helen to be worse even than she is. Cousin Helen belongs to what they call the fast married set. I thought fast meant immoral and I hope Cousin Helen is not that, if so it is due to her mother's bad influence. I am glad that Cousin Harriet escaped from those influences and went into settlement work in Chicago. Perhaps I shall go into settlement work in Chicago too instead of teaching, or it might be interesting to travel like Cousin Victoria Royce and collect objects of art though after all that is not very useful. I hardly know what Cousin Patricia Royce is like. I shall probably see something of her at high school this fall. She did not stay at finishing school, I don't know why. If she is like her mother perhaps I will have a good influence over her, that is if we become friends. She is two years older than I. Of course I too have the same unfortunate ancestry in part, it all goes back to our great-grandmother who was descended from a German baron and thought herself better than other people just as the Germans do to-day. But I think I have escaped that taint, as mother's father was descended from one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence."

"I can see an opportunity," she wrote at another time, "for doing good in my own family. Bud has never been very good in his studies and I can help him. I am afraid I have not always been as gentle and patient with my little brother as I should have been, I will try earnestly to be different in the future."

But the diary changed abruptly within the space of a few weeks, losing its tone of earnest and somewhat smug righteousness. "Who knows but that I may become a very wicked woman?" she wrote. And again: "I hate Bud." And again: "I do not think I believe in God."

Then, for a time, the more intimate self-communings ceased, and the diary was a record of the daily round of sports, into which Janet had entered again with her old enthusiasm; and then, for a while, the diary was broken off.

It resumed again with the brief notation, dated a few weeks after high school opened: "I like Pat. Very much." Pat was Cousin Patricia.

2.

Janet and Patricia had met by accident in a corridor. "Oh, hello!" said Patricia. "I heard you were going to be here! I haven't seen you since the last family reunion. Glad I ran into you!" But somebody came along for Patricia just then, and she said hurriedly to Janet, "See you later!" and ran off. Janet noted that her cousin's yellow curls were prettier than ever and that her face still held its infantile charm. And that was all she saw of Patricia until a week or two later they met in gym, where they were ranged on opposite sides in a basketball game. Patricia had more energy in a gym costume than would have been guessed from the fluffy clothes she wore to match her curls. There was strength in those round arms. Janet couldn't help admiring her.

A few days later, a girl in Janet's class invited her to go on "an Empire party." The Empire was a—or rather, *the*—vaudeville theater. "Your cousin, Patricia Royce, is coming. She and Daisy Yorke and I, with one or two of the new girls. We have a box."

Janet hesitated. She realized that she was being "rushed"

for Patricia Royce's sorority. Janet had principles about sororities. She believed that they were undemocratic. And yet they had their conveniences; she intended to live in a sorority house at college, in order to be away from home. But sororities and fraternities in high school were decidedly out of place—she had heard her father say so. They were even more snobbish than they were in college. And the Deltas had the reputation of being the most snobbish of them all. Janet was being asked because she was a March. And she had intended, as a March, to set a good example by not joining any fraternity. But what she felt, after a moment's hesitation, was that this was an invitation from her cousin Patricia. She did rather want to see a little of Patricia.

She accepted, with no noticeable enthusiasm.

That afternoon Patricia was waiting for her as she emerged from her ancient history class. "Hello," said Patricia, and linked her arm with Janet's. "I'm going to see you at the *matinée* to-morrow, aren't I?"

"Julia Torrey asked me," said Janet.

"I told her to," said Patricia. "And that's what I wanted to see you about. Of course, you know what it is—this *matinée* stuff. The Deltas. And I thought you might have some funny ideas about sororities and I'd better talk to you myself."

Her cousin's speech, Janet had already noted, was crisply in contrast with her soft blonde effect; and it rather added to the piquancy of that effect.

"The truth is," said Janet, "I'm *not* terribly overwhelmed with the prospect of being a Delta."

Patricia laughed. "Julia said you looked rather doubtful about it. Julia was shocked." Patricia tightened her arm in Janet's, and spoke in a confidential undertone. "Between you and me, I don't take this sorority very seriously. I'm not romantic about it the way Julia and Daisy are. It's just silly kid stuff. But look at it this way—if you're going to have any fun here, you have to belong to a sorority, and ours will give you the most fun—such as it is! Besides, I want you to," she added imperiously.

Janet was deeply pleased to find that Patricia was interested in her; and thrilled to hear her say so thus frankly.

"All right," she said. "But how am I expected to behave at this—this test?"

Patricia laughed. "Behave any way you like," she said. "It isn't a test, for you. That's all settled. I told them I wanted you in."

It was a boastful sentence, but it was not uttered as a boast; it was told as a simple matter of fact by a girl in a hurry, not mincing words. Janet looked at her cousin with a new curiosity. Patricia had been at High only a year; and in that time had come to a position of dictatorship in its chief sorority. Janet had heard that already; she could not doubt it now. There *was* something compelling about Patricia.

"That's all, then," said Patricia. "See you to-morrow!" and was off.

The Empire party and its aftermath at Vick's, where they all had ice-cream sodas and chatted till it was time to go home to dinner, was "silly kid stuff," doubtless, but it was interesting just the same. The new girls, freshmen, were trying to be at their ease in what was to them a crucial situation; they knew they were going to be talked over later, and that they would receive or fail to receive a "bid." Julia and Helen were at once kindly and blasé; these youngsters should receive no hint from their manner as to how the balance tipped, for or against. But Julia and Daisy, in their turn, were humble before Pat—as they affectionately but with a sense of great privilege called her. They were obviously Pat's adorers. If Pat ruled the Deltas, it was because they couldn't help giving her her way about everything. And Pat herself, completely at ease, with nothing to risk, said what she liked, and whatever she said was the right thing to say. It was all very different from the easy-going comradeships of Winga Bay and the frank and friendly spirit of prep. But it was fascinating, too. Janet felt that she ought to despise these girls for their servility to Pat; but evidently they couldn't help it! "I have never felt that way about anybody," she said to herself, and decided again that she had a cold nature. Yet she *was* glad that Pat liked her.

Some days afterward, Pat told her why she had left her finishing school and come to High. "I couldn't stand it," said Pat. "Nothing but girls, girls, girls! And the unmitigated

society of girls—well, it's something terrible. You've no idea. If you think these Deltas are crazy about me, you ought to have seen those others. Flowers and candy every day as if I were—I don't know what. And if I spoke a harsh word to one of them, she burst into tears; I know I'm pretty—I'll admit it—but this was too much. I've had men crazy about me, too; but I can handle a man. These girls—they're worse than any man. I always did hate mushiness—and they, well, they just made me sick. You wouldn't believe it. I *had* to get out. I wouldn't have gone back there for anything in the wide world. Give me men every time. You know where you're at with them! Even these kids here make me kind of tired. You'll get tired of them, too; but you'll get to know the boys through them, and as long as there are boys around, girls aren't so silly."

3.

Janet was making a hit with the Deltas. At first, it seemed, because Pat had taken her up; and then because—strangely enough—she had some of Pat's qualities. Yes, it wasn't Pat's yellow curls and baby face that made her a leader among the girls—these were things that men fell for; it was her essential indifference to what anybody thought about her—that, and some charm too deep for Janet to analyze. Janet's charm was different; but she had some such mysterious thing about her, as she discovered, something that drew the girls to her, wanting her friendship; and she too was indifferent. She didn't care. That was what gave her power. It was strange, and all rather silly, but it was exciting, too.

The Deltas had a kind of social life of their own. They didn't have a sorority house, but they gave parties at the homes of the members, competing in elaborateness and adult pretensions with the Betas, their only serious rivals. At these parties Janet met all the fraternity boys and danced with them. They danced better than the boys at prep., and rather better than the boys at Winga Bay. It was pleasant, moreover, to be sent a bunch of roses before a dance, and escorted home in a taxi. Yes, it was fun, "such as it was"—Janet remembered Pat's disparaging phrase.

Pat herself, a little to Janet's surprise, was not an active participant in Delta activities. She came to the parties, and that was about all. The Deltas had to be content with a word, a glance, a smile in passing. And the reason, as Janet presently learned, was that Pat lived a social life of her own, exalted above these schoolgirl affairs. Though she had not yet "come out," she nevertheless had a minor place in the pleasures of that younger set in which her sister Helen was conspicuous. So that Janet, in spite of belonging to Pat's sorority, saw little of her, until Pat began to invite her to Aunt Dolly's and Cousin Helen's.

Janet remembered Aunt Dolly as an elderly woman who wore her hair in a funny way. This impression had been formed when she was a child; now that Janet was beginning to be a woman, she saw Aunt Dolly in a new light. That hair of Aunt Dolly's, she realized—that hair which still preserved a faded hint of its youthful gold—had once been the most beautiful hair in the Northwest; and the funny way in which it was done was a relic of the fashion of hair-dressing that had been in vogue in those by-gone days.

Aunt Dolly had a lorgnette; she never looked through it, she only played with it, as if it were a fan, swinging it idly on its cord, as Englishmen in funny-pictures swung their monocles. She swung her lorgnette as Janet greeted her, and smiled—a nice smile that brought back some of her old laughing beauty into her face. "Janet dear!" she said, "why, you've grown up!" And she dropped her lorgnette, took both Janet's hands in hers, and kissed her warmly on the cheek. "And you look more than ever like Brad," she said.

She turned briskly to pour the tea, but paused and whispered to Janet, "I hope you'll come and see me often."

Pat, in the corner, while Mrs. Royce handed tea to a young man, said to Janet: "Mother's a good old sport, isn't she?" And Janet vaguely realized that to Pat her mother was merely making a gallant effort to keep up with the times.

Aunt Dolly's daughter Helen, otherwise Mrs. Hedstrom, the wife of George Hedstrom, whose father owned some iron mines—was what her mother might have been thirty-odd years ago. Janet hadn't seen her for several years, because she had been off somewhere in Europe with her sister Victoria. Helen

dimmed young Patricia's beauty. Her golden hair was really burnished gold, her face was the sort of thing poets wrote about—red roses and white ones. But her hair—which she wore bobbed—reminded Janet of another flower, a golden chrysanthemum. Pat was crude beside her, so far as looks went.

"Helen, I want you to go with Janet and help her get some clothes," said Pat brusquely.

Cousin Helen laughed. "Pat dear!" she said. "Just because you have no taste in clothes and I have to buy your things for you, is no reason— Janet's clothes are quite all right!"

"Yes," said Pat, "but I mean, for parties! Janet could get away with something that was almost evening dress."

"So she could," said Cousin Helen, reflectively. And she did go shopping with Janet, and found two frocks in which Janet looked nineteen, and which yet were "suitable for a young girl."

Her father and mother looked with amusement and some gratification, not unmixed with pain, on this new Janet who was emerging out of her chrysalis. In her young intoxication with the pleasures of life she was altogether delightful; and she had a sturdy common-sense attitude toward it all that reassured them. "I know it's all nonsense," she said to Pen, trying on her new frocks at home. "But I rather like it! You don't mind, do you?"

No, Penelope didn't mind, exactly. This—or something like this—was what she had planned for Janet. It was to have come a little later, not while she was still a high school girl—but it was all right. And if Janet chose Cousin Patricia and Cousin Helen as guides in this matter, that was all right, too. The fact was, it hurt. But that was a petty personal emotion, to be discounted and put aside. The main thing was Janet's happiness. Who, seeing her a year ago, would ever have supposed that a new frock would mean so much to her this year? Children are hard to understand. And she was growing up. She was almost seventeen.

Janet was full seventeen, that winter, when Pat asked her to come along to the Ice Carnival at Black Hawk Lake. George and Helen would take them out in the car, and they would see the ice-hockey and the ice-boat races, and dine and dance at the Gun Club. There would be skating, too.

Janet felt all the dignity of her seventeen years as she prepared to participate in this very adult enterprise. There would be college men there to dance with. She was glad of those new frocks, in which it was universally agreed that she looked nineteen.

She studied herself in the glass. The summer tan, thank goodness, had worn off, and there would be no mark on her back to show where her bathing-suit had ended. Janet scrutinized her features in turn—the broad brow, framed in with black hair, the straight black eyebrows, the dark eyes, the high cheek bones with a flush of health emphasizing them, the straight nose, the mouth which had formerly been not quite to her satisfaction because the lower lip seemed a trifle “sensual,” the firm round chin—and she decided that they weren’t at all bad. Best of all was her slim height; truly she looked a young woman, and not a school-girl!

They bundled up in heavy furs against the biting January wind, and drove from Cousin Helen’s to the Gun Club. Janet had seen ice-hockey and ice-boat racing often enough, but not under such auspices. She had been one of a crowd, and when the spectacle was over had gone home on a street-car. But now, after the day’s sports, she dined on venison at the Gun Club, and danced herself warm before motoring home. And the stalwart heroes of the ice-hockey and ice-boat racing—none of whom could have suspected that she wasn’t nineteen—danced with her. Only one of them, it was true, interested her. But he interested her very much; she could have danced with him forever. He was on the ice-hockey team from the State U. She would be going there in less than a year.

It was on the third and last night of the Carnival that a terrible thing happened. . . .

The man had been drinking, of course. But she hadn’t known that. Everybody was skating; the lake was lit with

colored lanterns, and it was like fairyland. Janet was in a flaming red sweater and tam. She loved skating. She had been utterly happy. And he had come up and joined her. She thought he might be somebody she had met—and anyway, it seemed to make no difference. She hadn't noticed anything wrong with the way he skated. They had gone far out, against the wind, and then turned back, the wind carrying them along almost without any effort of their own. It had seemed quite natural to take hands as they skated back. She wished he were the young man of the ice-hockey team. Then it would be nicer. She was thinking of that other man, and not of this one at all. They stopped and sat on the bank, a little way from the pavilion, taking off their skates. She hadn't noticed that they were alone. She hadn't dreamed of anything happening.

It began—and ended—suddenly. He threw his arms around her, and tried to kiss her. Then she smelt the liquor on his breath. But that was no excuse for the things he said—things too horrible to think of. He was pressing his body tightly against hers—and saying those horrible things.

She must have been dazed for a moment, too surprised to exert her strength. In another moment she had wrenched herself loose and was running away, running to the pavilion, away from him, away from the horrible things he had said.

Afterward, she accused and defended herself by turns. She told herself that she shouldn't have let him skate with her; that she shouldn't have held hands while they skated back; that it must have been her own fault. But it wasn't, it couldn't be, her fault! Whatever she had done, he had no right to say such things.—But, as she ran away, she only smelt the breath of that attempted kiss, and heard his words echoing in her mind.

She went to the Gun Club, and washed her face, her lips. She had to dress for supper and dancing. She took up her frock, the prettier of the two, saved for this final night of the Ice Carnival; and sat down, with it spread across her lap.

Pat, coming to dress, found her there. "What's the matter, Jan?"

Janet told her the story—all that she could tell.

"Don't say anything about it to Helen or George," advised Pat. "It would just upset them, and spoil the party."

"You don't suppose I want to *talk* about it," said Janet fiercely, and burst out crying for the first time since childhood.

"Here, you've got to be a sport," said Pat. "There's always some fool to get drunk at a party. You don't suppose you're the first girl that a drunk ever talked like that too, do you?"

"I didn't tell you what he *said*," protested Janet.

"You don't need to," said Pat drily. "I can imagine.—And don't cry any more, or you'll have to tell everybody."

"All right," said Janet, and washed her face again, and put on her pretty frock.

5.

She *had* to tell her mother. Everything.

And her mother reassured her. "You weren't at all to blame, Janet," she said.

Janet sat brooding. Then her fist clenched. "I know what I ought to have done," she said. "I ought to have swatted him—hard. I'm sorry I didn't."

And that ended the matter. Except for a ridiculous incident that occurred a few weeks later. Ridiculous in one aspect, at least.

It was after a Delta party. A boy had taken her home. He was a senior, and a half-back on the school football team; so that she didn't afterward have to feel ashamed of herself for picking on somebody not her size! It was a warm night in March, with a full moon. They both lingered on the porch to look at the moon. They were standing side by side, leaning against the railing, with a pillar of the porch between them. "It's a lovely moon," said Janet, softly.

The young half-back misunderstood. He felt called upon to put his arm around her waist. In Janet's mind there was a confused picture of something from the past, and in her nostrils the remembered smell of whisky—a trick of the imagination. And without her volition, as if fulfilling some past wish, her right hand swung around, knocking the young man's head against the wooden pillar. It made a sharp crack.

The young man slid down on the floor of the porch. His face was white in the moonlight.

"I have killed him!" thought Janet.

She knelt beside him in horror and pity.

There was the faint fluttering of an eyelid. She watched, in an anguished hope. He opened his eyes.

"What happened?" he asked weakly.

Unreasonably, she became angry. "What—what were you trying to *do*?" she demanded.

He stared up at her, remembered, felt his head. "God knows!" he said, "and I'll never try to do it again!"

He sat up. She helped him to his feet. "Can you walk?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," he said.

He started to go, and then turned to her. "Please," he said, "if you don't mind—let me invent some story about this head, to-morrow!"

"You don't suppose *I*—" She giggled hysterically. "I don't want to tell about it, either," she said. "And, Bill—I'm terribly sorry!"

"Thanks," said Bill, and went down the steps.

Bill's invention next day wasn't very convincing, and nobody believed it. But nobody ever knew just what had happened to Bill's head that night—except Pat.

Oddly enough, Pat sympathized with her. "A man thinks a girl can't look at the moon without feeling mushy about *him*. I'm glad one fellow found out different."

6.

Aunt Dolly was giving an Easter-week house-party at her summer place on White Swan lake. Really it was Helen's party—and Pat's idea. There were some nice college boys in town for the Easter holidays, boys whom Pat had known last year at High when they were seniors. The summer house could be opened up for a few days, and Aunt Dolly would come out and start things. There would be a dinner dance, with a small orchestra. That was about all the country Aunt Dolly cared for at this raw season, and she would go back to town, leaving Helen to chaperone the party. There would

be just six couples left, including five boys that Janet didn't know, and three girls she scarcely knew.

The girls were Pat's special friends in that "crowd" she chiefly went with, girls of eighteen and nineteen, who were in turn the younger fringe of the "set" that Helen belonged to. They were Lulu Vinje, and Fitzi Fitzgerald—her real name being Martha, which didn't fit her at all—and Doris Genter. Doris was the elder of the Genter girls, being nineteen years of age and presently to "come out." Lulu and Fitzi were eighteen—though little Fitzi scarcely looked it. They had all gone for a year or two to finishing school and come home to play. These were the girls that Pat spent her time with, in preference to the school-girls of the Delta.

Janet knew that she was asked because Nancy, the younger Genter girl, had strained a ligament in her ankle and couldn't dance. Pat had talked to Janet about the party earlier, and Nancy's name had been mentioned and Janet's hadn't. Janet had understood perfectly—she wasn't quite old enough to go with Pat's crowd. Although, as Janet had reflected, Nancy was hardly older than Janet—at most, not half a year older. And then came Nancy's accident, and Janet's invitation. Janet was pleased. There were lots of other girls Pat might have preferred to ask; this invitation meant that she thought Janet sufficiently grown-up, after all. Her only warning was, "I hope you won't break any heads."

Janet laughed. "I'll try not to!" she said.

She was curious as to what these parties of Pat's crowd really were like. People—outsiders—said they were "wild" parties. Girls were supposed to drink cocktails. But the same things were said, by outsiders who were willing to believe anything, about some of the high school parties. Janet did not believe, any more, all the things that were said about the "fast" set. And she never asked Pat anything; that would have shown her ignorance. Now she was going to find out for herself.

One thing that she unconsciously looked forward to was meeting "men"—not old men like one's father's friends, but older than the boys at High and at prep, who were actually boys, that is to say, big babies. She wanted a masculine certitude, an authority, a self-confidence, a flavor of achievement,

which these boys lacked altogether. On the football field they looked like men, all right; but when you talked to them you realized that they were only infants, overgrown and helpless and confused. She felt infinitely older than any of them. She wanted to meet some young men whom she didn't feel superior to. So far, she had met only one—the young man of the ice-hockey team whom she had danced with at the Ice Carnival. But her memories of the Carnival had been smudged with that terrible other person's whisky breath and unbelievable words; she didn't like to think about the Ice Carnival at all. Yet it was for some such thrill as she had found in his firm, sure touch in the dance, and the cool masculine assurance in his look, that she was waiting. Perhaps it was this thrill that Pat found in these parties of her own crowd. Perhaps that was why she thought the Delta affairs "silly kid stuff."

Janet didn't know quite what she was expecting of Pat's party; but she was rather disappointed at first in the "men." They were from Yale and Harvard and Princeton; but they were only High school boys a year older. So it seemed to her that first night. They were respectful, attentive, with manners that were perfect except for a touch of anxiety in their perfection; they danced well—but, it seemed to Janet, uninterestingly; and they were all hopelessly alike. They all wore their hair slicked straight back. They all had the same kind of obvious young handsomeness. Even their names—Dickie, Freddie, Johnny, Eddie, Willie—had the same childish ring; she was calling them by these names by the time the party was a few hours old, and feeling the kindly maternal tolerance that such pet names suggested to her mind. It was a nice party—the little orchestra that Aunt Dolly had engaged was lovely, the room was bright with hothouse flowers, and it was fun to dance. But—the party was not very exciting, so far.

Aunt Dolly went back to town in the morning, and the party, at late breakfast with Cousin Helen in charge, seemed already to brighten up a little. Perhaps Aunt Dolly *had* put a damper on the occasion. Or, as one of the young men said, in an aside to Janet as the brightening was in process over the grapefruit, "Looks like somebody's been cramping our style!" It wasn't at all respectful to Aunt Dolly; but Helen didn't

mind, for, overhearing it, she rewarded the speaker with an amused glance. It was evident that Helen was really, in spirit, one of this younger crowd; and that they felt her to be so. There was a distinctly released air at that breakfast table, an air of freedom from constraint, a sparkle and a zest, and even, about the most innocuous remarks, a flavor of ribaldry. In fact, Janet wasn't sure but that there was more than the flavor of ribaldry in some remarks whose catch-phrases everybody except her appeared to understand. But it was all very gay and pleasant. Janet looked at the members of the party with a new interest. The boys all looked more like individuals in their tweeds. And one of them, the one called Freddie, the one who had made that remark about "cramping our style" seemed a distinct personality. There was a gleam of laughter in his brown eyes, and a teasing curl in his chestnut hair. She liked him.

She was sorry she had been so scornful, last night, to him. But she needn't have been sorry, because her scornfulness had made just the right impression. Freddie now devoted himself to impressing her in turn.

It had been hoped that the weather would permit rambles out of doors; but the ground being half-frozen mud, they set out in a couple of motor-cars for a drive that brought them to a road-house for lunch. Janet had been riding in the tonneau of one of the cars with Fitzi and Dickie and Freddie. The style of the party had already become sufficiently liberated for her to observe that Fitzi and Dickie were rather pleased with one another; but she was a little surprised when Dickie, as they climbed in for the ride back, pulled little Fitzi down on his lap. Fitzi snuggled contentedly against his shoulder, and Janet saw Freddie looking wistfully at the empty space thus left beside her. She smiled, and he sat down; and then he put his arm around her. Janet stiffened; just because Dickie and Fitzi—! And then she saw that Johnny, at the wheel, had his arm around Pat. And she remembered what Pat had said about not breaking any heads. Of course, she mustn't be a silly prude! Besides, she had wanted to find out. If this was the style of the party, she wasn't going to be the one to cramp it. She sank back against Freddie's shoulder, and

surrendered a hand to him when he groped hesitantly for it under the laprobe.

At the same time she had a vague sense of disappointment. She had been expecting something new, and here was something merely tiresomely old. She had known about spooning all her life; she wasn't much of a spooner herself—she thought it rather silly. This, of course, wasn't exactly spooning. She was merely resting against Freddie's shoulder, and letting him hold her hand. And he was being very nice about it; he could see that she didn't care two pins for him. She suddenly rather wished she did. Dickie—Janet didn't look, but couldn't help knowing what was happening so close beside her—now and again bent over and kissed Fitz's neck. It would be nice to have one's neck kissed by some one that one liked *very* much. Janet shut her eyes, and thought of the young man of the ice-hockey team. Then she became aware that her own neck was being kissed. For a moment it was alarming and very sweet; but that was because the young man of the ice-hockey team was mixed up somehow in her sense of what was happening. The next instant, her thoughts straightened themselves out, and the delicious tremor of alarm died away in her nerves. It was only Freddie, after all.

Once, during the ride, he kissed her lips. Dickie and Fitz had been kissing. Janet had never been quite so close to other people's kisses, and they made her uncomfortable, though she tried to ignore them. Dickie and Fitz kissed at such length, silently and dreamily. Janet was a little disgusted, and a little envious, and a little sorry for Freddie, who didn't have anybody to kiss. Except her, of course. She might as well let him. She did—passively, and wondering why people liked kissing so much. This kiss was rather different from the quick bird-like kisses which were all she had known—and even more tiresome. Was he going on with this kiss for ever? Suddenly, again, the thought of the young man of the ice-hockey team intruded into her mind; insensibly she relaxed, and this meaningless ceremonial became for an instant an ecstatic surrender—and then she abruptly pushed Freddie away.

They reached the house again, and dressed for dinner. George, Helen's husband, had come, and before dinner mys-

teriously invited the boys into another room. Helen was rather cross. "He oughtn't to do that," she said. They all came back looking well pleased, and Helen scolded George. It appeared that he had brought out a bottle of cocktails. "I know what's the matter with you!" said George gayly. "You're just sore because you didn't get any!"

"I really don't see why we should be discriminated against," said Pat.

"Didn't you bring any more?" asked Fitzi.

"Trot out the other bottle!" demanded Lulu.

"What makes you think there's another bottle?" asked George. But finally he produced the other bottle, which had been left in the ice-box to cool, and the cocktails were passed around.

It was Janet's first cocktail, and she was glad that nobody raised the question as to whether she should be allowed to drink it. She tasted it, and it was horrid, reminding her of nothing so much as gasoline. But she did not want her inexperience remarked upon, so she shut her eyes and gulped it down.

They danced to the phonograph that evening; and as they danced in and out of the various rooms, Janet was kissed several times. That was all right; it was just like what happened at Winga Bay, except that it happened oftener. Already, in one evening, she had been kissed as much as in a whole year at home. And the fact that these kisses were quite impersonal, merely a part of the dancing, made them still more all right; if she kissed everybody, nobody could think it meant anything special. In fact these mid-dancing kisses were nothing to think about twice. It was in sitting out dances with Freddie that the kisses became more experimental and at the same time more exasperating. She really cared nothing about Freddie. But she wanted to know what was happening to herself, to make her enjoy these prolonged kisses—some change in herself that had turned them from something at first merely annoying to something strangely exciting. "I don't care for him a bit," she repeated to herself. And she asked herself, "Am I a sensualist?" That thought was rather agreeable; but it wasn't true, she realized. No, she was still essentially cold, really indifferent, except for the moment of dreaming

which sometimes came in the midst of these kisses, when her scornful sense of present realities became dim, and it wasn't Freddie any longer, but a warm wind, or a warm wave, carrying her away into some mysterious and enchanted place. She would have been afraid of this feeling, except that when she abruptly awoke, it was only Freddie. She couldn't be afraid of Freddie. So that was all right, too.

The last day of the party brought a cold drizzle, and they were cooped up in the house all day, with the result that they all got rather on each other's nerves. They tried to tell stories, not with any great success. They played childish games, and in the evening had charades. This was more fun, and Cousin Helen was quite splendid as a Persian dancing girl in a rather daring costume of nothing much; and Janet in another Oriental scene had been passionately kissed in public, and hadn't minded at all. They were glad to get back to town that night; yet they all had, even in their mutual weariness of each other, a feeling of intimacy that made the last hours of the party somehow nicer than the first. They were fully at ease with one another now; and that gave their very boredom a kind of charm.

At home, thinking it all over, Janet was a little surprised at herself. And in telling about the party to Pen and Brad, she left out some incidents. It might sound rather horrid, if she told of being kissed by five young men she had never seen before. It *did* sound horrid put that way. But it really wasn't so bad as that. It wasn't five strange young men—it was just Freddie and Dickie and Johnny and Eddie and Willie. It really didn't mean anything. But Pen wouldn't understand that. And as for the queer emotion that sometimes came with Freddie's kisses, and had so little to do with Freddie himself—that was very much her own secret. Pen couldn't possibly understand how she felt about that—she hardly understood herself. She was just beginning to find out what she was like; and she was terrible curious. How could a grown woman of—heavens! forty-six (it seemed incredible, but Pen *was* that old)—how could she know that to a girl of seventeen it was terribly important just to *find out*! This was her own affair—it had nothing to do with Freddie. He was—just Freddie. And this was, perturbing, fascinatingly, *herself*!

But she did conscientiously tell Pen and Brad about the cocktails. One cocktail didn't sound so much.

They didn't object to the cocktail. After all, they must have reflected that she was seventeen, and not a child any longer. And after that, on special occasions, such as a birthday, Brad brought home a bottle of sweet wine, and they each had a glass (excepting Bud, of course) with their dinner.

Janet thought that was nice of her father. She didn't realize that they, too, like Aunt Dolly, were trying to keep up with the times—or at least not lag too conspicuously, in their daughter's eyes, behind.

7.

After that, Janet was a part of the "younger crowd." That is to say, for the greater part of the time she was a romping schoolgirl; and once in a while a quasi-sophisticated young woman who in a blasé manner permitted her hands to be held and her neck and occasionally her lips kissed by young men who did it with the proper air of impersonal gallantry, as an incident in a social occasion. This custom was already setting into a fixed convention in the younger crowd; the impersonally gallant manner of giving and the blasé manner of receiving these attentions were a part of the convention. "Mushiness" was discouraged as bad form, as a kind of rusticity or naïveté. The too exuberant—as, for instance, Fitzi—were rallied in public and called down in private; while as for the boys, if they could not adapt themselves readily to the proper standard of behavior, they were excluded as boorish. It was distinctly understood that there was nothing personal in these attentions. If two people were in love with each other, they had no right to inflict that private emotion upon a social gathering. Let them go off by themselves, where their exclusive and tender and ridiculous behavior would cause no embarrassment. So Pat declared, and Pat's word was pretty much law in her crowd. She herself set a perfect example of indifference to the caresses she received.

Janet found no difficulty in conforming to this convention. The fact that these gallant demonstrations had no personal significance made it possible for her to accept them without

compunction. She, also, was a perfect mask of indifference. This did not mean that she was really indifferent; of course she liked being kissed; but it was not nice to show it. Though, so far as any special fondness for the young man of the moment was concerned, she was truly indifferent enough. It was not he, but some vague dream of her own, that sent a slow sweet medicine through her veins. But what anybody was dreaming, what inner emotions one might entertain, was nobody else's business, so long as one behaved oneself, that is to say, wore outwardly an air of total unconcern.

Love-affairs between these young men and girls were not exactly in good taste. At the best, they were regarded as a form of childish folly. Because when people fell in love, they usually wanted to get married. And these young men couldn't get married. They had to finish college, and go into business, and make a place for themselves in the world. They couldn't get married for years. As for the girls, when they "came out" in a year or so, they would be quite ready for marriage. They would be taken up by the younger married set, and shown off to all the marriageable men. They would become engaged to those men, and married to them. And those men were such as had finished college, gone into business, and made a place for themselves in the world. They were more likely to be around thirty than around twenty years of age. And these boys that now played with the girls of Pat's crowd would one day, five or ten or fifteen years later, be marrying girls of a new crowd—not these girls, but other girls now in their younger 'teens. There was a bar, uncertain and sometimes rashly broken, but implicitly there, between these young people of opposite sex. They belonged, so to speak, to different marriage-classes. Therefore it was foolish for them to fall in love with each other.

They were young, and they were drawn to each other; but they were well-bred, and as they transgressed the old conventions which limited the degree of permissible erotic contact, they established new conventions of their own. A strange Puritanism ruled their behavior; in this modern world in which they lived, a world that afforded them continual opportunities to break every code, they kept faith, after their fashion, with the social order which gave them with such confidence

their freedom. The young men, when they had made a place for themselves in the world, would marry young women of whom they could trustfully assume that, notwithstanding their freedom, they had merely taken harmless boyish kisses with an air of bored indifference. Such, at least, was the convention.

Janet's own Puritanism, no less than her eager and curious youth, committed her to this convention. She was afraid of love. She did not want to marry for—oh, ever so long. She did not like "mushiness." She admired self-control. This life presented certain differences from the life she had been familiar with in Scott Park and at Winga Bay; and these differences, as she saw them, were such as she approved. Young people simply fell in love and got married at Winga Bay. This evasion was infinitely more exciting.

And yet, after all, as it came to seem in the space of a year, less exciting than she instinctively wished. The very harmlessness of these endearments, the complete safety which she could feel in the company of these young men, annoyed her. It was too tame. Her health, her energy, and the unfixed aspirations of her dreaming mind, required a loftier, or a more dangerous adventure. If any of these young men had ever entertained a thought that could not be quelled by the touch of a gentle hand or a look of serene rebuke, it might have been more interesting. If there had really been any occasion, ever, for self-control beyond the point of mere outward manners, if her nature had ever been deeply stirred, or if she had even been convinced that any young man desired anything she was not quite free to give—if any problem had been raised, any doubts aroused . . . but no, that couldn't happen. There was nothing in the situation to make any girl want to be wicked; and if she had wanted to, the young man would have been, doubtless, shocked. That was the ridiculous thing—that what a girl might not give wasn't even wanted. Or so it seemed. Janet, without quite knowing why, was impatient of such a dull, slack, feeble kind of virtue. Her world was too tamely safe.

Cigarettes had suddenly come in, among Pat's crowd. The year before, only an occasional girl smoked, and on the sly. Now they all smoked, with an air of having always done it. Janet smoked, too, but drew the line on grounds of health at

inhaling. She was still proud of her health and strength, and intent on keeping her body fit. She had made rules for herself about tea and coffee and candy; so it was simple enough to make rules concerning cigarettes and cocktails. Her rule for cocktails was one in an evening; and if there was any wine, only one glass. And she and Pat inflicted that same rule on Fitz, and enforced it rigidly. Fitz lacked discretion. She had once become almost drunk, on two cocktails. The girls were rather ashamed to think that a thing like that could have happened to one of them. Also a very promising young man had shown no discretion whatever in the matter of cocktails; he had been perfectly disgusting, in fact; and Pat's crowd saw him no more. In these matters the rule of the girls was absolute. The boys had to behave according to a girl-made code, at least when they were with the girls. The decisions were swift, the punishment ruthless, and there was no appeal.

Even in matters which lay outside their association with girls, there was a girl-made law to rule these youths. During Janet's senior year in High, a young man home from college for the holidays had been invited to a party where Janet was present. It had promised to be a gay affair; but a cold whisper went around among the girls as they arrived; the party turned out to be strangely decorous, and everybody went home early. The young man in question wasn't asked again, and subsequent parties were as gay as ever. The whisper which had gone round among the girls had concerned the young man's very intimate and secret life; it was nothing less than the intimation that he had 'a horrid disease.' So Lulu put it. Who had given Lulu this information? The young man's best friend, his chum at college! Chums though they were, his loyalty was to these girls rather than to his friend. There had been no kissing that night; the young man's private life had cramped their style.

This was a question which had been discussed between Pat and Janet. Pat was emphatic in her opinions. It wasn't true, she said, that all young men went to prostitutes. "Maybe it used to be true, but it isn't any more. And I think it was always mostly brag. I've talked to boys; and they haven't lied to me, either! If girls can keep straight, I guess boys can.

Anyway, most of them do—the kind we know. Besides—how *could* they? It's so dirty! Anyway, a boy that wants to play around with floozies had better be pretty careful *I* don't hear about it, or he won't get a chance to play around any with me!"

And it wasn't hard to believe that the young men who came to these parties had pretty much conducted their private lives in accordance with this item of the girls' code. They were, if that meant anything, well-bred; and, more than that, they were, at the age of nineteen or twenty or twenty-one, still children, with a child's interests, a child's need of play—and if this play-need could be satisfied in the company of girls of their own class, with whom they felt most at ease, there was less necessity for them to take up with girls of an objectionable sort. Janet had heard such ideas expressed at home in the conversation of her parents, and Pat's emphatic views merely confirmed her assumptions.

A safe world. If Janet could have thought of herself as ever in danger of any sort—! But no; her first cocktail wasn't a possible road to ruin, nor yet her first cigarette, any more than the first of these not altogether tiresome kisses. These things were all within—most unquestionably within—her conscious control. She wanted something that would require all her energies to cope with. She wanted adventure.

8.

The United States entered the war.

To Janet, at eighteen, the war seemed to have been going on always. It had started when she was only fifteen, one summer while they were at Winga Bay, and Janet hadn't been much interested in it; her father had said it would soon be over—that the German people would come to their senses and depose the Kaiser. That fall, when they came back to town, it was still going on; in prep the current topics class took it up. There was an earnest effort to follow military operations intelligently with the aid of maps; and the boys and girls learned how to pronounce the names of many European towns and rivers; but nothing happened—except war; that kept up, monotonously, with battles won and lost, for a year, two years.

Would the United States enter the war? That had been for a while a debatable question; and then the question became, When? Those who had at first taken the German side in discussions were now anti-Hun as a matter of course. The past seemed very remote. War had changed from a thing in the newspapers and in the talk of the older people, a thing for young people to take an intelligent interest in at school, to a fact about the world—it was at war against the Kaiser, and America would be in it soon. A few months later, and military bands were playing in the streets, Leonard Vance and Martin Tucker were away at an officers' training camp, Lucy Vance was pestering congressmen and senators to get the law changed so that she could be in the ambulance, and the boys in Scott college were drilling.

In three years, people had had time to get used to the idea of death in battle—and young people, at least, did get used to it. Gradually, it had become a commonplace, a familiar fact and one scarcely worth thinking about. Jim Tucker, drilling at Scott, did not worry about whether his brother Leonard would be killed; he was envious of Leonard, especially when Leonard came home in a first lieutenant's uniform. Jim wondered if Janet would love him if *he* had a commission.

Janet spent the summer as usual at Winga Bay. In the late summer, Martin Tucker came home on a brief furlough and was married to Mona Iverson. Janet was a bridesmaid. She asked Mona: "Are you going to try to have a baby?" Mona laughed. "No, I'm going to try not to. Why should I have a baby with Mart away?"

"To remember him by," said Janet.

"Goodness—you talk as if he weren't coming back."

"He may not," said Janet. "You'd better have a baby. That's what I'd do if I were in love with somebody. I thought that was why you were getting married."

"Well, there's something to that," said Mona. "But having babies isn't all there is to marriage. I'm marrying Mart because I love him. I suppose you don't know what that means. You've never been in love yet."

"No," said Janet thoughtfully. Jim was in love with her. If he were old enough, he'd be in the army; and he'd want her

to marry him. Would she? No, she wasn't going to marry until she was ready to have children.

She wanted to be "in" on the war, too. She thought a good deal about how it could be managed. And there didn't seem to be any way. She couldn't be in the ambulance, she couldn't be a nurse. She wasn't old enough. Of course, she could lie about her age; but that wouldn't do any good—they would find out.

What *could* she do?

Nothing, apparently.

But that summer an officers' training camp was established near St. Pierre. There was to be a Hostess House at the camp, with young women of the best families of St. Pierre and White Falls as hostesses. So the papers said; and Pat's name—with photograph—presently appeared as one of the hostesses.

Janet called up Pat. "Can't I help?" she asked.

"But you're going to be at the U.," said Pat.

"I'm not going to be at the U. twenty-four hours a day," said Janet.

"All right, come over and we'll talk about it."

9.

All Janet's spare time that winter was spent at the Hostess House, and at parties in which the best people of the two towns endeavored to show the young officers an adequate hospitality. She danced. She taught the clumsy ones—and there were lots of clumsy ones—to dance. She was kind to them. She was a sister to them. She promised to write to them. And she learned how to discourage their less seemly advances without any loss of dignity on her part and without any unnecessary humiliation on theirs. After all, what would under other circumstances have seemed an improper proposal had, in these particular circumstances, a peculiar logic and appropriateness; when such things happened, which wasn't very often, Janet didn't feel insulted, she felt very sorry; sometimes she wished she were "that kind" of girl. Sex, in the face of death, seemed more and more impersonal. And, in a slighter way, she did find some scope for her spirit of ad-

venture, in a quaint sort of generosity to these men. When the time came for them to leave, and they wanted to kiss her good-by, she let them. Heaven only knew what sort of girls they *had* been with, to get the comfort she couldn't give them! When she came home each night, she scrubbed out her mouth with a strong solution of peroxide of hydrogen. In her imagination she was risking her health, her glorious health, the precious cleanliness and strength of her young body, with every sloppy farewell kiss. She wasn't doing it for her country—nothing so grandiose as that; and not exactly for *them*, either; she was doing it for the sake of her self-respect. If this sort of thing was all that the world asked of her—why, take it! This, and going without fudge when the sugar-rationing rule was in force, were her sacrifices; and if going without fudge was more useful, it had a lesser dignity in her eyes. . . . There had been one man she would have made a greater sacrifice for, and that was Freddie, home on a furlough just before going overseas; but he hadn't even understood what her shy, frightened, heroic advances meant; he had given her a brotherly kiss, and gone away, to spend the night—in some other girl's arms, perhaps? She didn't even know—and then to the trenches.

10.

In the spring of 1918, Leonard Vance was killed at Belleau Woods.

In the summer, Freddie was killed in the second battle of the Marne.

The armistice came in November.

Martin was home with the first of the troops, safe and sound. "*Now* we'll have a baby!" said Mona to Janet.

"That's that," said Janet—a phrase she had picked up at the Hostess House.

Her war-adventure—such as it was—had ended.

Now for peace.

Lucy Vance hadn't come back; she was going into the Red Cross. There would be plenty of work for the Red Cross from now on, she wrote—a strangely ominous phrase in a letter sent to friends at home who were happy in the thought

of a world at peace. Subsequently Lucy was heard of in various odd parts of the world—Poland, Armenia, Asia Minor, Greece. There were even incredible rumors of her having been the mistress of an Arab potentate. Such things, to be sure, might happen in a world at war. And for Lucy Vance the world might still be the field of war and its incredible adventures; but peace was the word in St. Pierre and White Falls.

Other girls that had been overseas came swaggering back, with stories to tell. The girls who hadn't been over crowded around to hear. Janet listened enviously. She hadn't been under fire, she hadn't driven a car over shell-torn roads, she hadn't seen men die in agony and kept a cool head; she hadn't had astonishing "affairs" with majors, surgeons and war-correspondents; she hadn't done anything except go without fudge and kiss lieutenants good-by. But, without the overseas experience of these lucky girls, she had acquired somewhat of their attitude toward life. It was an attitude of laughing skepticism about everything. They had seen all the laws of God and man violated; Janet hadn't, but somehow she had ceased to take the laws of God and man very seriously.

Peace—and being a sophomore at the State U. That was what lay before her.

CHAPTER THREE: Choices

I.

AS a student at the state university, living in the Alpha sorority house, and only going home on week-ends and not always then, Janet had enjoyed a great deal of freedom; and as a girl engaged in "war-work," she escaped even from such adumbrations of parental care as the Alpha House itself undertook to exercise over its occupants. Once such liberties had been given it was hard to take them away, so hard that usually neither the parents nor the sorority made any serious attempt to do so. Janet was free to do pretty much as she pleased. And she didn't know what to do.

Something was troubling her mind. She had learned that some of the crowd didn't stop with "petting"—as it was now called. She had suspected it last year in the case of Fitz, who had a violent crush on a young lieutenant. But she *hadn't* suspected it of Pat. And it was true. Pat and Johnny. She had learned of it by accident; it wasn't such a deadly secret but that half a dozen of Pat's girl friends knew all about it; all of her intimate friends, in fact, except Janet herself. One of the others, supposing that of course Janet knew, had given it dead away. Janet didn't ask Pat about it. One didn't ask Pat about things. If she wanted you to know, she told you. And she evidently hadn't wanted Janet to know.

That was all right. Pat could have her secrets. But now that Janet did know, it obliged her to revise her memories in the light of that knowledge—and revise at the same time her sense of what was going on in the world about her. If Pat and Johnny, those models of their own peculiar kind of discretion, had been keeping a secret like that, then everything was possible.

It had begun, Janet learned from the incautious Lulu, just before Johnny went away to training camp. That had been,

Janet supposed, natural enough. And then, as it chanced, Johnny had been transferred to the camp at St. Pierre. And the affair had gone on. That was what Janet couldn't understand. Of course, if Pat had supposed she might never see Johnny again—but an affair! That could only happen if Pat were in love with him. And that was hard to believe. Pat in love! And then Johnny had gone overseas. And in the meantime Pat had come out and was a regular member of the younger set, and was spending her time meeting eligible men; she had even been rumored engaged to one of them. That should certainly have meant that the affair was over. Johnny had returned to finish college. But in the Christmas holidays—

That was what Janet really couldn't understand. The war was over. Either they ought to get married, or else leave each other alone. It wasn't fair for Pat to pretend to be looking for a husband when she had a secret lover. Why *didn't* they get married? That was the puzzle.

And it had to remain a puzzle for a while—all the more puzzling when Janet saw Pat in all her blonde delightful cool serenity moving through that grown-up world into which Janet herself now, at nineteen, had occasional glimpses. Illicit love-making no longer had the glamour of danger and death about it. In peace times, people were either married or not married, and everybody knew which. Secrets were not, to be sure, such desperate matters to Janet as they had once been; she had her own trifling secrets. But a secret of this kind—it seemed a lying, sneaking sort of thing. And yet Pat wasn't a lying, sneaking sort of person—she didn't look it, at least. But then, she didn't look like a girl who was in love, either.

And that reflection, jarring suddenly in among Janet's thoughts, brought them to a swift conclusion. *Things weren't at all what they seemed.* This conclusion was, in a strange way, comforting. It settled things—and it settled them in the mood which in regard to other matters had become habitual with her, a mood of laughing skepticism. She looked at Pat's cool arrogant face, and smiled to herself with a certain satisfaction. Pat—and a secret lover! No, things weren't what they seemed.

Her first emotional disturbance at this news now appeared

to her to be mere naïveté. She would not be so easily surprised again. Fitzi? Of course! No doubt in the world of that. And Lulu herself? Perhaps. Had she, Janet, been excluded from this secret simply because she was the only one of the crowd who—

Yes, the only one who didn't have such a secret.

Her world grew more interesting.

And then she became ashamed of herself for thinking such things. That was what people called being "nasty-minded."

She resolved not to think any more about it.

She threw herself with a new zeal into her studies, and with her old zeal renewed into basket-ball.

2.

In the summer she didn't want to stay at Winga Bay with the family. She was fretted with the burden of her twenty years. She wanted to begin to live. She remembered her dream of a career. Impatiently she resumed her habit of keeping a diary, and with it, rustily, her shorthand. And together with these, she renewed her habit of staying awake for hours at night and thinking seriously about life.

She couldn't make up her mind about a career. But that could wait. What she wanted now was work.

She felt again her adolescent idealism about usefulness, tinged now with a sense of adventure. She had been an idler long enough. She would go into the world of work and find something there worth doing. At first, she told herself, her work wouldn't be anything important; but it would at least serve to show what stuff she was made of.

Thinking about it brought her no nearer to working. Meanwhile she was at Winga Bay, idle.

She went in to St. Pierre early one morning, bought a paper, and looked at the want-ads. They were bewildering to one who had never looked at them before. She sat on a park bench—it seemed the appropriate place—and studied them.

Artist, handy with brush, celluloid novelties . . . assistant bookkeeper . . . assorter, experienced . . . bindery woman . . . bonnaz operator (whatever that might be!) . . . candy-wrapper . . . cashier . . . chambermaid . . . cook . . .

cleaning woman . . . crochet beader . . . designer on dresses . . . embroiderer . . . finisher, experienced . . . girl for errands . . . girl for check-room, neat . . . girl, no experience necessary, \$12 a week . . . hemstitcher . . . house-keeper . . . inserter . . . janitress . . . knitter . . . lady, elderly . . . mangle girl . . . manicurist . . . marcel waver . . . mil-liner . . . model, size 16 . . . model, size 36 . . . mother's helper . . . nurse maid . . . operators, experienced . . . pack-ers . . . passementerie hands . . . saleslady . . . stenogra-pher . . . telephone operator . . . trimmer . . . tucker . . . waitress . . . winder . . . woman, handy with needle . . . young girl to answer 'phone . . . young lady of refinement and tact as assistant in doctor's office—that was the list.

It was obvious to Janet that she couldn't be most of these things, and equally obvious that she did not want to be most of the others. She couldn't be an assistant book-keeper or a cook; she didn't want to be a saleslady, a telephone operator, or a young girl to answer 'phone. She could be a model, except that she wasn't size 16—and certainly not size 36. She wondered if she were a young lady of refinement and tact, and how she would like being assistant in a doctor's office. She realized that she should have finished business college that summer when she had gone for only three weeks; if she had, she might at least get a job as a stenographer. But she was utterly unskilled. "Girl for errands" was about her capacity, it appeared. Or perhaps "girl for check-room, neat." She smiled ruefully.

What would she do if she were poor? She would work as a "girl for errands," if need be, till she got enough money saved up to go to business college and learn stenography and typing. That would be the sensible thing to do now. But she had been going to school—she wanted to go to work. She paused to ask herself if the State U. was fitting her for any kind of useful work; not unless it were teaching, seemed to be the answer. She had once thought of becoming a teacher. But she wanted to work *now*, not some time in an indefinite future.

Of course, she might ask her father; he would think of something. But she wanted to get this job herself.

Everybody didn't advertise in the papers. Sometimes people

put a sign out. "Help Wanted." She could walk along the streets and look.

3.

She rose, and stuffed her paper in a convenient trashcan, whence it was rescued by a much unshaved man. Janet hesitated, thinking with compunction that he too was looking for a job and lacked the money to buy a paper. But the man had turned to the sporting page and settled down comfortably on his iron bench to read about the next prize-fight. So Janet turned away, and walked down the street.

There wasn't any "Help Wanted" signs on that street. She turned a corner, and then another. She was now outside of St. Pierre's busiest section. And there, across the street, was a sign. "Salesman Wanted."

If a salesman, why not a saleswoman? But it was a bookshop. If it had been a question of selling cars, or sporting goods—she knew all about those. But books! However, she went in. It was a musty place. Most of the books were old. There were some new books, though.

The proprietor was also old. He was sitting at a desk in the back of his shop. He looked up at her as she entered. She stood still, waiting for him to come to her. Presently he rose and came forward in an annoyed way and asked, "Is there something you want?"

"Yes," said Janet. "A job." She glanced back at the window. "You need a salesman. I wonder if I would do."

He looked at her thoughtfully. "Have you ever sold books?" he asked.

"No," said Janet. "But I'd like to."

"You're fond of books?" he asked, frowning.

"Not particularly," said Janet.

That, oddly enough, seemed to be the right answer. The old man smiled.

"Why do you want to work in a bookstore?" he asked.

Janet considered her answer. "I want a job," she said. "I think I could sell books. Won't you give me a chance?"

The old man twisted his mouth into a doubtful grimace. "I wanted a man," he said; "and I wanted somebody with some

experience." His grimace changed to a quizzical smile. "If I had you in here, people would look at you instead of at my books."

Janet frowned. "Nonsense!" she said rebukingly.

"There's one now," said the old man, pointing with his thumb.

Janet hadn't noticed that anybody else was there. She was startled. So was the young man, and he transferred his intent gaze to the book he had held in his hand. He was a big awkward looking man of about twice her age. Having looked at him, she looked away and dismissed him from her mind. She turned back to the proprietor.

"Do I get the job?" she asked.

The old man fidgeted a little. "I don't know," he said. "You might leave your name and address, and I can let you know."

Janet found herself embarrassed by a sense that the strange young man was listening. She didn't mind her prospective employer knowing who she was, but she didn't like the idea of every Tom, Dick and Harry knowing. But what of it, after all? She was Janet March, and she was looking for a job. Let him think what he liked! For that matter, why should a loafer in a second-hand bookshop know or care who Janet March was?

The old man had taken out his pencil and a dirty envelope from his pocket.

She gave him her name, and Winga Bay as an address. He wrote it down.

Janet glanced at the young man. He was staring at her again with a deep, thoughtful, possessive gaze, exactly as though she were a picture; he kept on looking, entirely unabashed by her rebuking stare through and past him. "*He* knows who I am, all right," she thought to herself.

She gave back his stare, directly and impudently, and walked out.

She didn't hear from the old man at all; but two weeks later, after she had told her wishes to her father and he had sympathized and understood, and found her a job as an assistant filing-clerk in an insurance office, she received this strange letter from New York:

"Dear Janet March—I saw you in Jenkins' Old Book Shop, and was too dazed to speak to you. I should have gone to see you, but I was still rather in a daze. You see, I had got to thinking of you as an imaginary person—an invention of my own. And yet, I thought I recognized you when I saw you enter. At least, I knew you would look like that! I want to see you and talk with you. But my stupidity, or whatever it was, prevented me when I had the chance. So now I'll have to wait till you come to New York. I have a bookshop here—you can work for me, if you want to. Anyway, you must come and see me when you do get to New York—and I guess there's no doubt that you will be here when you are twenty-one. If you are the Janet March I've invented, you'll have to come. Faithfully yours, Roger Leland."

Janet read this letter twice through, and then shook her head.

"Crazy," she said, "crazy as a loon!"

She read the letter several times more, without being able to arrive at any different conclusion. But it was interesting, especially the part about her being in New York when she was twenty-one.

She finally copied the whole letter into her diary, and then destroyed the original, and presently forgot all about it. She said nothing about it to Pen or Brad, chiefly because she had got out of the habit of telling them things. But Pen or Brad could have explained that letter, at least in part. They would have remembered Roger Leland, though they would not have been able to guess why he should think he had invented their daughter Janet!

Janet, of course, had forgotten the young man who spent two weeks at Winga Bay when she was only six years old—there had been, in all the years since, so many young men at Winga Bay.

But even if she had remembered him, she would hardly have understood this letter. There was indeed something queer about it.

"Well," said Janet, "when I do go to New York, I *shall* go and talk with him!"

The offices of the Old Reliable Insurance Company occupied the whole of the tenth floor of a St. Pierre office building. There was one huge room filled with desks; and partitioned off on one side, shutting off most of the daylight, a number of small private offices, marked "President," "Vice President," and so on. The last of these rooms was marked "Filing Clerk." It was ranged on every side with cabinets labeled with the names of various states, and with the letters of the alphabet. In the middle of the little room were two flat-topped desks, heaped high with correspondence; and at the two desks, facing each other, were two young women, busily engaged in sorting this correspondence.

Outside at this moment there were two little processions along an aisle that led the length of the big room. Six people, a little distance apart, were going away from the filing office with correspondence in their hands. Five more people were going toward the filing office empty-handed and in a great hurry; and then another joined that procession, a boy with a large wire basket full of correspondence.

Inside the office, the two young women sorted hastily. One of them was about twenty-six years old, quiet, neat, swift and sure in her movements; she had a pleasant face and a smooth coil of brown hair; she wore a becoming blue-and-white checked gingham dress. This was Miss Lloyd, the filing clerk. The other, a twenty-year-old girl with black hair worn short within the last few years and not yet grown long enough to do up properly, so that a few black strands escaped from their fastenings, giving her a slightly untidy look, and with a harassed frown puckering her forehead and a nervous flush on her cheeks, was Miss March, her new assistant. Miss March had been here a month.

The door opened, and the first of the procession entered. Miss Lloyd looked up and smiled, while continuing to sort. "Good morning, Mr. Lang," she said. Mr. Lang was the vice president.

"Good morning. Let me have that Johnson correspondence again, will you?"

Miss Lloyd rose from her desk, went to a particular cabinet, flipped open a manilla folder, and drew out a handful of papers.

"Thank you, Miss Lloyd," said the vice president, and went out. Miss Lloyd was already back at her desk sorting correspondence.

The door opened immediately, and another man entered. There was another exchange of greetings. This was one of the agents.

"I'd like to see what you've got on Piper, John J. Piper, of Stanton," he said.

Miss Lloyd nodded to her assistant, who rose, went uncertainly to a cabinet, looked it up and down, and then turned to inquire, "In this state?"

"No, Michigan," said Miss Lloyd.

Miss March returned with a letter.

"That all? Thanks very much."

As he went out, three stenographers entered, all together. Their demands were precise, read from a typed slip. Miss March found what they wanted quickly. In the meantime Miss Lloyd had finished sorting the pile of correspondence on her desk, and had taken what was left of her assistant's pile and sorted that.

"Well," she said, with quiet satisfaction, "that's the last of yesterday's mail." And she rose and going to the cabinet commenced swiftly filing it away. Janet was about to do the same with her pile when the door opened again, and the boy with the basket entered.

"Here you are!" he said with an air of doing them a favor, dumped the basket on an empty space on Miss Lloyd's desk and went out.

Miss Lloyd had told Janet that they ought to get all yesterday's mail filed before the first of to-day's mail came in. And twenty-four mornings they had worked hard to that end; but they hadn't yet succeeded. Janet knew it was her fault, though Miss Lloyd didn't say so. Miss Lloyd had very little time to say anything; that was Janet's fault too, for her inefficiency threw more than her share of the work on Miss Lloyd. But Miss Lloyd was very patient. In another ten minutes they would have had that correspondence all filed.

In a month, Janet's inefficiency, measured in time, had been cut down from something like an hour to a mere ten minutes. That wasn't so bad, after all!

Miss Lloyd was working even faster at the cabinets, now that the new mail had come in. Janet took the new mail and began sorting it into piles. There was silence for a quarter of an hour.

Then the door opened again.

"Yes, Mr. Wheelock?" said Miss Lloyd, stopping her work. Mr. Wheelock was the president.

"I'm sorry, Miss Lloyd," he said. "But that letter isn't in Mr. Hammer's office. It must be here."

He had been in earlier in the morning about that letter.

"I'll look again," said Miss Lloyd.

She had looked before, and she knew it wasn't there—at least, that it wasn't where it ought to be. But ocular demonstration might placate Mr. Wheelock.

She drew out the proper drawer of the cabinet, opened it at the proper place, and looked. The letter wasn't there. She held it open for Mr. Wheelock to see. He peered in. The letter wasn't there. He fumbled the correspondence in front and back of the proper place. The letter wasn't there.

"Where can it be?" he demanded.

Miss Lloyd looked helpfully thoughtful. But she didn't need to think where it might be. She knew all too well where it might be. If a letter wasn't in the right place, it might be in any one of the wrong places—and there were several thousand wrong places in an efficient modern filing system.

But she didn't want to suggest that—it meant a day's work or more, ransacking those cabinets. She preferred to believe that it was reposing under the blotter on Mr. Hammer's desk. That was where the lost letter had finally been found last month. There was usually about one important letter lost a month, and it was never her fault. But she always had to bear the brunt of the search. She had suggested that this letter might be in Mr. Hammer's office; she couldn't go further than that. She waited for the president's next suggestion.

He raised his eyebrows and glanced at her assistant. "Perhaps," he said, "it wasn't filed in the right place."

"I filed it myself," said Miss Lloyd firmly. Janet March,

she knew, was slow; but she was accurate enough. She might not remember the names of important clients, nor which state a town was in; but she never guessed. As a matter of fact, it had been Janet who filed that letter. But Miss Lloyd preferred to take the responsibility upon herself. Somebody had come and taken it out of the cabinet after it was properly filed—probably Mr. Hammer, though he denied it. Mr. Hammer was working out a new “plan of campaign”; he frequently stayed at the office evenings to work on it; and when he was here alone, the files simply weren’t safe. She knew that: and the president ought to know it. The files were not supposed to be touched by anybody except the filing clerks; but Mr. Hammer was a law unto himself. If only, when he took out some correspondence, he would just have left it out where it could be put back properly, it wouldn’t have been so bad; but he sometimes put the letters back himself, in the wrong place, if he did not lose them in his office.

The president walked up and down the filing office. He was a desperate man. That letter was very important.

He stopped abruptly. “It must be *here!*” he said, and looked accusingly at Miss March. “Have you looked in your desks?”

Of course they hadn’t. But they would, to please him. Miss Lloyd opened the drawers of her desk, one after the other. They contained handkerchiefs, mirror, comb, powder, rouge. Nothing more.

Janet opened the top drawer of her desk. It should have been empty. But there was a letter.

She held it up, wonderingly. “Is this it?” she asked.

The president seized it. His mingled hope and fear were almost too great for a human heart to contain. He gazed at the letter. He sighed—but with relief.

“Yes,” he said, “this is the letter.”

“But,” said Janet, “I didn’t put it there!”

The president smiled at her—pityingly, for trying to tell foolish lies; tolerantly, for she was the daughter of his friend Bradford March; amiably, for after all he had the letter; humorously, for he had been right all along in his suspicions; and as one smiles at a good-looking girl, for she was rather good-looking. And he went out.

Janet's face, as he turned away without replying, grew dark; angry blood flushed her cheeks; her fists clenched.

"Now don't get wrought up," advised Miss Lloyd, calmly and a little severely.

"But I *didn't* put it there!" protested Janet.

"I know you didn't," said Miss Lloyd. "And I'll bet a shipload of silk stockings against a last year's hat that I know who did it. Hammer did it. Not a doubt in the world."

"But *he*—" said Janet, meaning the president of the Old Reliable Insurance Company, her father's friend—"doesn't believe me!"

"No," said Miss Lloyd—back at the cabinet again. "He'd rather believe Hammer."

"But *why*?" asked Janet.

"Because," said Miss Lloyd. Then, after a pause, she elucidated. "Because Hammer's a man, for one thing. And because Hammer has a big job, and you're just a filing clerk."

"But why has Hammer got a big job? And why haven't you?" asked Janet. Her admiration for Miss Lloyd's ability was perhaps excessive; but Miss Lloyd was efficient, and Hammer wasn't. Miss Lloyd did know about the business, and Hammer, in spite of his airs, simply did not. "I know as much about insurance already as Hammer does," she said, defiantly.

Miss Lloyd laughed, but not scornfully. "I shouldn't wonder if you did," she said.

She paused in her work—a rare thing for her—and addressed Janet:

"You'll never make a good filing clerk," she said. "But that's not saying you couldn't hold down an executive job. And if you were a man, I expect you'd have a right to prove it." She knew that her assistant was the granddaughter of Andrew March; but her tribute was sincere. She knew about executive jobs. "I," she said, "wouldn't make a good executive, just because I'm trained to handle detail work. My training would be against me." She thought for a moment. "Still," she said, "I'd like to have the chance!"

The door opened. An agent wanted the latest correspondence "in that Pederson matter." Miss Lloyd handed it to him. He went away. The girls worked on, not talking.

5.

Miss Lloyd—she did not become Elsie to Janet until the second month—had received a special training in the state university, a training corresponding to the courses in engineering which were available for young men. Of course, Elsie could have taken engineering; but, being necessarily of a practical turn of mind, through having had to help support her family for years, she chose a course which was likely to lead to employment. The course for girls reached from stenography and typing up to cataloguing and filing. Elsie Lloyd had intended to become a librarian; but the pay of library assistants was so low that she had chosen rather to be a stenographer and work her way up to filing clerk. She had done so rapidly. And this, it appeared, was the limit of her possible advancement in the Old Reliable Insurance Company. She *might* have become an agent; she might have become a telegraph lineman, just as easily. Elsie was not a pioneer, either in temperament or in theory. She was a slightly discontented but very efficient filing clerk. She would remain a filing clerk all her life—unless she married.

And that, Janet discovered, was what occupied Elsie's secret thoughts, and kept her from being more discontented than she was. Elsie was engaged. She had been engaged for a year, to a young advertising man. They hoped to be married next year. Ted had been drafted into the army, though he had never got across; and when he came back to St. Pierre he found it hard to get a job again. The advertising business had taken a slump, and he wasn't making enough money just now to be married on. That was the difficulty at present. But beyond this filing office—only a year away—Elsie saw a home in the suburbs, with a kitchen of her own, where she would cook breakfasts and dinners for Ted.

"Then you'd rather cook meals for somebody than work in an office?" Janet asked.

"Not just for somebody," said Elsie. "For Ted!"

"I wouldn't," said Janet firmly.

"Oh, well—you don't have to," Elsie pointed out.

It occurred to Janet for the first time that Elsie envied her. She had been so used to envying Miss Lloyd her efficiency that

it was hard to realize this. However, it wasn't the efficient Miss Lloyd who envied her—it was the lonely and somewhat pathetic Elsie. She loved her Ted—and couldn't marry him for sheer lack of money. Janet could, presumably, marry any time she wanted to, so far as money was concerned. She merely didn't want to.

They discussed love in the rare intervals of their work during this second month. Janet had resolved that she wasn't going to quit this job until it was time to go back to college. These discussions made it more endurable.

She wanted to know, and she didn't mind asking Elsie, how it felt to be in love. Elsie tried to tell her. She wanted to be with Ted. She wanted to be his wife. Yes—in answer to Janet's question—she wanted to have babies for him; but not right away, they wouldn't be able to afford to have children for a few years. And one child was enough, she thought. Not more than two, anyway. People couldn't afford to have big families any more. The cost of living was too high. Even a wife, without any children, was a drag on a man. That was why she and Ted weren't married now. The strain of keeping up a home would be too much. He'd be so worried about rent and grocery bills that he couldn't think about his work. It was all right to talk: a wife was pretty nearly a luxury nowadays. She could sympathize with Ted.

This wasn't exactly what Janet wanted to know. It was too much like a college course in economics. Janet wanted to know how it felt to be *in love*. But Elsie seemed to think she was telling just that.

It wasn't until the third month that Elsie began to ask Janet questions. There were things *she* wanted to know—about the life of the rich. She had read the Sunday papers, and novels about the smart set of New York, and she had heard the things about the country clubs and so on around St. Pierre. She didn't—she laughed—believe everything she heard. But she was curious. "Everybody's curious about the way rich people live," she said frankly.

Janet explained that she wasn't an authority on that subject. She knew hardly anything about the rich. Her father, though all the Marches were supposed to be rich, certainly wasn't. She told how quietly they lived in Scott Park, and

at Winga Bay. She said something about the simple, old-fashioned home-life of all their friends. "Life among the rich," she went on, with editorial earnestness, "isn't all actresses and divorces." And there she paused, suddenly remembering Uncle Eddie, and his actress, and his divorce. "Of course," she amended, "scandalous things do happen—once in a while."

It was the scandalous things that Elsie wanted to know about.

"You mean—cocktails, and so on?" Janet asked.

"Oh, everybody drinks cocktails," Elsie said.

There was some beating about the bush. Then Elsie—"just for example"—told some stories she had heard about the wild house-parties of St. Pierre. Janet opened her eyes wide, and then laughed. "I think," she said, "that people *want* to believe the rich are wicked, and they just make up these stories to suit themselves. I think those horrid things you were telling me are what those people would like to do themselves if they had a chance!"

No, said Elsie, those things had been told her by the wife of a minister.

"Well," said Janet "you can tell her they aren't so!"

Elsie seemed a little disappointed.

In another talk she brought up one more matter that required to be settled before her mind should be at rest about the rich. She supposed, she admitted, that it was just as absurd as that story she had told Janet about the millionaires exchanging wives over the week-end; but anyway, it *was* said that girls, before they were married, had lovers—"in the continental sense of the word," Elsie explained, flushing. "I don't suppose that can be true, either?" she concluded wistfully.

Janet flushed, too. For a moment she weighed her loyalty to her kind—her own friends—to the claims of honesty. "Don't . . . other girls . . . ever have lovers?" she asked in a low voice, and added, laughing, "in the continental sense!"

This time Elsie blushed deeply. "I suppose they do, sometimes," she said, and went on filing correspondence.

Janet prided herself that she was past being shocked. But she was startled. Elsie, too? "Because," she said to herself,

"they're too poor to be married." She felt sorry for Elsie—especially sorry, because Elsie was apparently ashamed of what she was doing. She thought of Pat's high, calm, arrogant pride. She wanted to reassure Elsie, to make her feel that she wasn't wicked, after all.

She began a tactful discourse upon the morality of having lovers—in the continental sense. She invented reasons to justify it, with Pat in her mind; she said things that surprised her as she said them, for she had never thought them in her life, though she may have read them somewhere. "If two people are in love with each other," she said earnestly, "why should church and state interfere? Having words said over you—what difference can that make? Love is the true sacrament!"

And yet these eloquent phrases didn't have nearly so much weight, it seemed, with Elsie, as Janet's answer to her question, "So they *do*, then?"

"Yes—of course," said Janet loftily.

"I wondered," said Elsie. "And if they do, I don't see why other people shouldn't!" That, in Elsie's mind, was evidently the true sacrament—the example of the rich. If *they* did it, it was right.

But Janet, in her readiness to believe anything, had believed a little too much.

"You know," said Elsie, "if Ted weren't so terribly conventional—" and she flushed again.

Her subsequent elucidations left no doubt in Janet's mind that she had misunderstood the nature of Elsie's and Ted's relations. They were *not* lovers—in the continental sense.

Janet was confused, and then frightened, as she realized what she had done. She hadn't intended to persuade Elsie to be wicked—only to assure her that she wasn't, if she was!

And if Elsie were persuaded by what she had said—that was too dreadful to think of.

Janet didn't know what to say. She couldn't very well take back all her eloquent arguments. And she couldn't say that it wasn't true that girls sometimes— So she didn't say anything.

It was Elsie who spoke, candidly confiding to the exponent of the superior morality of the rich her readiness to follow

their exalted example—"if only Ted—but I'm afraid Ted is too terribly conventional. Men are, more than girls, don't you really think?"

Janet didn't dare to think.

A phrase out of a sensational newspaper came to her mind: "Apostle of Free Love." It sounded disgusting—but she had been just that.

She had to break in somehow upon these appalling confidences.

"As for me," she interrupted, "I shall never marry!"

Elsie laughed knowingly, and went back to her filing.

"Why should you?" she remarked.

6.

As two people may easily become, who have told secrets to each other and regretted it, Janet and Elsie were estranged for a time. And Janet, when that estrangement showed signs of being bridged from Elsie's side, maintained it by a terrific preoccupation with her work. She was afraid there would be more confidences.

And yet she could not let the matter rest there. Her conscience wouldn't let her. She realized now that she hadn't even the excuse of honesty for telling those dreadful things to Elsie. She had practically said that most of the girls she knew were immoral. And she actually knew of only one solitary case. The others had been merely wild guesses. She was just as bad as the silly people who believed those disgusting things about house-parties.

Apparently it was true, then, as she had already accused herself, that she was nasty-minded. But she couldn't quite believe that. The truth was that she simply *didn't know* what people's morals were like—and small blame to her if she guessed wrong! A momentary wonder came into her mind, as she remembered certain passages in history as studied at college, passages reflecting on the "laxity of morals" of people in other countries hundreds of years ago. With what certainty the books pronounced upon the private lives of complete strangers! Janet knew much more about the morals of

ancient Greeks and Romans than she did about the morals of her friends and neighbors in St. Pierre and White Falls.

Anyway, she would have to take back what she had said to Elsie. That would be painful, it would be humiliating, but it would teach her a lesson. She would humble herself and admit that she hadn't known what she was talking about. She would set herself right before she quit this job.

She was quitting the first week in September; barely in time to get her clothes for college. She couldn't leave sooner, because she had promised herself to stick it out.

That meant two weeks more here. Nothing terrible, Janet assured herself, could happen to Elsie in two short weeks as a result of the things Janet had told her. Janet was glad that Ted *was* "so conventional!"

But there was one day toward the end of those two weeks when Elsie showed signs of distress; and Janet was much concerned. She would have reopened confidential relations, except that Elsie, offended at the way her advances had been ignored, now ignored Janet's in turn.

And then there was another day when Elsie looked terribly happy—frighteningly happy. Janet feared the worst. But Elsie, absorbed in her happiness, kept an unbroken silence.

The last day came, and with it Janet's last chance to confess her fault.

There was no time until just at the end of the day. In another moment Elsie would rise and get on her things and go home.

Janet went abruptly over to Elsie and held out her hand. "I'm leaving to-day, you know," she began by reminding Elsie. "And I want to say good-by, and also—"

She paused. Elsie was as distant as possible. It would be hard to make that confession.

"Yes, I know. Good-by," said Miss Lloyd stiffly—and then shyly unbent. "I'm leaving, too—I've just given a month's notice."

"Oh!" said Janet. What could have happened?

"Yes—I'm going to be married."

So it had turned out all right after all!

"I wish you—and Ted—happiness," said Janet.

Elsie blushed. "It isn't Ted. *That's* all over. It's Bert."

She laughed. "I know it's awfully sudden. I was swept off my feet. And so was Bert. We're terribly in love with each other. And we're going to get married next month, as soon as I quit my job.—Bert's a mechanic," she added.

That last statement seemed at first irrelevant, and then it had a sudden meaning for Janet. Bert was a mechanic; and young mechanics could afford to get married when young advertising men couldn't.

"I'm really in love," said Elsie. "And Bert's a real man."

"Bless you both!" said Janet, in deep thankfulness, and bent and kissed her. Everything was all right, and she wouldn't have to make that confession after all. Then she hurried away, for she could see that Elsie was going to cry.

A mocking rhyme came into her head—

*"You may tempt the upper classes
With your villainous demi-tasses,
But Heaven will protect the working-girl!"*

7.

There was one more promise Janet had made—something else she had to say before she left this place for ever.

She went to shake hands with the president of the Old Reliable Insurance Company.

Mr. Wheelock regarded her benevolently. "I hope, Miss March, that you have had an interesting summer!" he said.

She knew he would say something like that—something patronizing.

"Mr. Wheelock—as an employee, I have never been lacking in proper respect for you, have I? I hope not. But as the daughter of your old friend Bradford March, permit me to say Bosh! This summer hasn't been any joke for me. It's been damned hard work and damned poor pay. This is a rotten poor place for a girl with any spirit. Thank you. Good-by!"

Janet had rehearsed that speech almost every night since the incident of the lost letter, putting in new damns every time some new insufferable condescension was inflicted upon her. She had hoped she would be courageous enough to say it, damns and all, to Mr. Wheelock, before she left. It was that

prospect which had helped her to keep up her resolution of staying there through the summer.

That speech would stick in his crop!

Janet had spent three months, except for week-ends, in a cheap room in St. Pierre, commensurate with her pay; and she had had for company on many hot evenings the Irish janitress. Some of Janet's expressions, and particularly her habit of thinking in damns, had come from Mrs. Maloney.

Anyway, that was Janet's farewell speech.

Only, when the time came to deliver it, she couldn't; she merely smiled and said,

"Yes, it has been very pleasant, Mr. Wheelock."

—Mr. Wheelock, also, had rehearsed a speech, not for Janet but for her father to hear. It had gone somewhat like this:

"Well, Mr. March, I expect on the whole it's been a good experience for your daughter—and *we've* managed to survive it! Lost letters, and all that kind of thing, you know! But that was to be expected. It was worth doing, just for the sake of giving the girl a glimpse of modern business. I expect she realizes what the word Efficiency means by now! And it's a good thing, too, to give her some idea of the opportunities that are open to girls, if they can only adapt themselves to the standards of modern business. In a way, it's an education for her." Et cetera.

That speech was duly delivered.

8.

Love! thought Janet.

It was a queer thing. It did queer things to people. Looking at Elsie, that time when she was talking about Bert, one couldn't help believing there was something to it. A real man, she said. . . .

Janet did not go directly home. She went for a little walk in the woods back of their place at Winga Bay. She had been doing that when she came home on Saturday afternoons. It was so peaceful there. Woods were better than the lake, for peace. There was something teasing and restless about water. The trees had the secret of rest.

Now, as she walked there, she was healing a hurt that she

didn't know existed—a disappointment. Work hadn't been what she had hoped it would be. It wasn't an adventure. It wasn't thrilling. It wasn't beautiful. It was petty. It was absurd. It was a bore.

Her mind turned again to the thought of love. She was puzzled about it. People fell in love—why? She hadn't found out.

The trees and the green leaves were beautiful, anyway.

She came home to find a party being given for her by Mart and Mona Tucker, who now had a little place of their own. It was also the farewell party at Winga Bay before they all went back to town. Everybody was there, in the evening, and there was a disposition, jocularly expressed, to regard Janet as a heroine. In fact, as a Bolshevik. That word, after having run the gamut of disreputability, was being playfully taken up by the people Janet knew and applied among themselves as the half-admiring designation of any courageous eccentricity.

The party, under the auspices of Mart and Mona, was a little wilder than the parties at Winga Bay had used to be. There was less of a difference now, since the war, between the manners of Winga Bay and the manners of Marion Park. Both had changed, for that matter; Marion Park had grown rougher, more informal, and Winga Bay more sophisticated. At the little dinner for six that preceded the party, cocktails were served; that was distinctly an innovation. The other girl present was Eve Iverson; she drank her cocktail and smoked her cigarette between courses like a veteran, Janet observed, though she was only eighteen; Janet was not sure she approved. The other two guests were Edgar Vance, who had been Eve's beau for years, and Jim Tucker. Why Jim, she wondered.

Janet felt as though she had been away from Winga Bay for ages—which was almost true. Marion Park, the Hostess House, the filing office, had each given in turn a new center for her thoughts during these four years. And now she was back home! She had kissed Pen and Brad upon her return, not as one who has seen them only last Sunday, and her father more recently than that, at lunch in St. Pierre—but rather as though she were an erring daughter come back to the fold again. And so she felt.

She hadn't quite realized that Winga Bay was changing along with the rest of the world. She had, in some corner of her mind, kept it as an ideal. And cocktails rather infringed upon that ideal. So, later in the evening, did cheek-to-cheek dancing. Not that it mattered; the younger people danced that way everywhere, now.

But, with all its changes, it was home. She felt released from the whirling thoughts, the curiosities, the questionings that had been agitating her so long. Out in the world, one had to think for oneself. Here, somehow, things were already settled. One needn't guess, or wonder, or doubt. Life had a meaning here; Janet didn't know exactly what it was—but Pen and Brad and the others did. She needn't worry about it.

She danced with everybody; and with Jim over and over again, since he wanted to so much, and it pleased him so. Even toward Jim she felt kindly. He didn't seem so tiresome as he once had. He had been away all summer, working on a farm; he was big and brown, and looked all of his twenty-one years old. He would be a senior at Scott this year. He was becoming a man. She felt rather proud of him. She let him put his arm about her when they sat out a dance, late in the evening, on the porch.

And then he had to spoil it all.

"Janet," he said, in a husky voice, "you know I love you."

Yes; she had managed to forget it—but she knew it well enough. He had always loved her. Why did he have to remind her of it now?

She said nothing, hoping he would drop the subject.

"Janet—dear—will you marry me?"

Her hands grew cold as they lay in his.

Marry him?

No!

"Jim—why do you ask me that?"

"Because I love you, Janet."

"But—I don't love you, Jim," she said, as gently as she could.

"You used to love me, Janet," he said reproachfully.

She drew her hands away. "No—I never did!"

"Well, that's not the question," he said hurriedly, "I want you to, now."

"But I *don't*."

"Well—I think you *could*—if you'd let yourself," he said awkwardly. "I'm not a bad sort." He laughed embarrassed at having to speak of himself. "I'm—well," and he fell back on repetition, "I'm not a bad sort. I don't see why you *couldn't*—if you let yourself!"

"But why *should* I?" Janet asked, argumentatively.

"Well—because. I mean—you're bound to love somebody sooner or later."

"And it might as well be you?" Janet asked.

"Unless," he suggested, struck by another possibility, "—unless there's already some one else?"

"Of *course* there isn't!" she said indignantly.

"Well—I'm glad to know that. Anyway, here I am—and you can think about it. You needn't decide right away, you know. I've got another year at Scott—and you can be thinking about it. I wish you would. I—I'll never love anybody but you, Janet."

"You oughtn't to propose to a girl in cold blood, Jim. I feel just as if you were a stranger," she said in a far-away voice.

"I *didn't* propose in cold blood. Why should you say such a thing?"

"I didn't mean you—I meant the girl. You ought to think of her—how *she* may be feeling. It was the furthest thing from my mind. It was just—a shock. I wasn't even *thinking* about you."

"You were—holding hands with me," he said.

"But—that didn't mean anything!"

"How was I to know?"

"You ought to have known." She rose. "Let's go back."

"You will think about it, Janet?"

"Yes—I'll think about it. But I've told you I'm not in love with you."

"Well—" He followed her in. "You *think* about it—There's plenty of time—"

She had heard that girls were elated to receive a proposal of marriage even when they were going to turn it down. She didn't feel that way about it, at all. The party was ruined.

Why had he had to do that?

Oh, well—he was in love. He couldn't help it. Love made people do stupid things. Though she would have thought he could *see*—

She told her mother that night. Without comment, just to hear what she would say. It was in Janet's room, after a long talk about nothing in particular, while Janet lay in bed with a cigarette and Pen sat on her bedside, also with a cigarette. Smoking was a new habit of Pen's, and she managed her cigarette like a blessed amateur, but Janet wouldn't have told her so for worlds.

"Jim asked me to marry him."

"Well, dear," said Pen, and smiled tenderly at her daughter.

Janet thought—"Why, she *wants* me to marry him!"

"I told him," she said, "that I didn't love him."

Pen smiled again, with a touch of wise, tolerant humor in her smile. "I suppose it was, as the story-books say, rather sudden." The smoke got in her eyes, and she blinked, and put her cigarette out. That was better. Cigarette smoking was rather unbecoming in Pen.

"He wants me to think it over," Janet said. "*He* believes I'll get used to the idea. . . . Do you suppose that's possible?"

"You must find that out for yourself, dear. I don't think there's anything *impossible* about it. And you've plenty of time to decide."

"He says he's very much in love with me," Janet mused.

"You must have known that," said Pen. "He's been in love with you for years."

"But *I* haven't been in love with *him*."

"I think you did rather care for him."

"So *he* says."

"But that isn't the same thing, of course, as love," said Pen. "You must be sure you're *really* in love before you marry *any one*."

"Marriage—" said Janet. She looked at her mother. "I don't think I want to marry at all."

Pen had heard her daughter say that before; and though she had never taken it seriously, still it rather troubled her. If Janet's family life had been unhappy, if her mother and father quarreled, there would be some reason for her hostility to the idea of marriage. Nevertheless, in spite of what seemed

an unjust reflection upon herself and Brad, Pen always felt an obscure sympathy with her daughter. She herself had been reluctant to marry. And now she felt that perhaps she understood Janet's reason. Sex had been no forbidden topic in the March household, but of course there were certain aspects of it that were not likely to be subjects of domestic conversation; and Pen knew how ignorant a girl could grow up to be. With a little embarrassment, she said:

"Of course, Janet, you know you needn't start in having babies right away, if you don't want to—when you're married, I mean. There are ways—"

Janet was more embarrassed than her mother. "Yes, of course," she said hastily. "I know all about that."

Pen was relieved. In spite of her theories, she felt that this wasn't a subject easily discussed between mother and daughter.

"Anyway," said Pen, smiling, "there's no hurry."

That was it! Janet thought. There was no hurry: she could put it off: but that was what lay ahead—being married. To Jim—or somebody. Settling down in Scott Park. Having babies. Oh, she wanted to have babies *some* time—but that wasn't the whole of life, surely!

"*You* weren't married at twenty," she said to her mother.

"No—" her mother laughed—"I put it off till I was twenty-one."

What difference, Janet thought, did a year or two make? It was all the same. People got married, settled down, had babies.

"Isn't there anything *else* besides getting married?" she asked.

"Yes, of course. There's your cousin Harriet." Cousin Harriet did settlement work in Chicago. "There's work," said Pen.

"Work!" said Janet scornfully. She had worked—all summer.

So that was what it came down to—a choice between two evils. Not evils, exactly, but tiresome, stupid, dull kinds of existence.

Still—her mother hadn't found marriage tiresome. That was because she was married to Brad.

Her mother was saying: "I wanted to build bridges."

Janet knew that, and yet she looked at her mother, a little startled. Impossible to think of her mother as wanting to build bridges.

"But you *didn't*," said Janet. "And anyway, women don't build bridges."

"No," said Pen. "Not yet."

"No," said Janet. "They typewrite, and teach school, and file correspondence." She made a wry face.

Marriage. . . . *That* was the meaning of life here at Winga Bay. She knew now. This year or next—or the year after. Jim—or somebody else. And probably it *would* be Jim. She would get used to the idea, probably.

But not yet.

Wasn't there anything else, except marriage and work?

A kind of impatience filled her mind, a resentment mixed with a vague hope.

"Well—good-night, Pen."

Mother and daughter kissed each other.

"She doesn't understand how I feel *at all*!" said Janet to herself when her mother had gone.

9.

Besides her college clothes, Janet bought a lovely party dress of silver-cloth. She called Pat up on the telephone and said, "*Please* ask me to a party. I'm dying for one before I go back to college."

The party was at Aunt Dolly's. Janet came late, and Pat went with her while she took off her things. "How do you like being a working girl?" asked Pat.

"There's nothing to it," said Janet. "Girls aren't wanted. They're just tolerated."

"There's something to that!"

Janet turned and looked at her friend. Pat's face was serene, it was only in her voice that there was something queer.

Janet sat down on the bed. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing new."

"Something about—Johnny?"

"You're a wonderful guesser."

"It isn't working out right?" Janet hazarded.

"Did anybody ever suppose it would?"

"Oh!" So Pat wasn't doing it on any of the high moral grounds that Janet had so vaguely set forth to Elsie.

She had to find out. "Pat—why don't you and Johnny get married?"

Pat stared at her, and then smiled. "Because he won't marry me, old dear," she said. "That's why. Why else?"

"But why won't he?"

"That's a question. Well, because he doesn't love me enough. How's that for an answer?"

"But then—why—?"

"Why am I hanging around his neck? Because *I* do love him."

"I must say I don't understand," Janet confessed helplessly.

"Neither do I, for that matter. Come on, mother's waiting for us downstairs. Unless there's some other little thing I can tell you?"

"Yes—there is," said Janet. "And please don't mind my asking. I really want to know. Your pride—" She hesitated.

"Spurlos versenkt," said Pat cheerfully. "The grand jury will now adjourn."

Love was more than a queer thing, thought Janet. Love was a damned queer thing!

But a few moments later, something queer happened to Janet.

There was a young man there she hadn't met before. A curly-haired young man. When the lights glinted on his curls, they were reddish—auburn. He was tall and slender, and his shoulders were rather sloping. Not an athletic type. His hands were slender, too, like her father's. His mouth was rather large, his lips full and red. A deep, pleasant voice. A little unusual, the whole effect, that was all. His age was uncertain. He looked young, but he had an adult assurance in his manner. He wasn't boyish. He carried himself as though he were Somebody—with a touch of insolence, perhaps. He crossed the room. Now he was talking to Aunt Dolly, as no young man ever talked to her—really, as though she were a little girl. And she was liking it!

He couldn't be young. He might be forty. . . .

"Who is he?" Janet whispered to Pat.

"That's a long story," said Pat. "Anyway, he's a sort of artist, and he's from New York, and he's been mother's pet for the last six weeks, and his name is Blatch. Vincent Blatch. I'll introduce you to him."

Janet did not like his name. She did not like his being an artist. She did not like at all his being Aunt Dolly's pet.

At that moment he looked at her. If she hadn't heard so much about it, she wouldn't have known what had happened to her. But this was what they had tried to describe. This was what accounted for the look in Elsie's eyes, and the note in Pat's voice. This was love. And Janet didn't want to be in love. At least, not with an artist who was Aunt Dolly's pet and whose name was Blatch. Yet she had an absurd wish that he were a mechanic and she a filing clerk, so they could get married right away. And she knew now why Pat had no pride.

But *she* had still her pride! This was perfectly ridiculous. And she would conquer it, if it killed her.

She walked steadily across to him—a feat as extraordinary as if she were on a narrow plank that bridged a bottomless abyss—and held out her hand, saying, "How do you do, Mr. Blatch."

Then she turned to greet somebody else; turned her back to him, and got away.

10.

It was evidently, Janet thought in her bed that night, a sickness: yes, a disease, a fever, a poison, a kind of going crazy. She knew now why that man in the bookstore had written that silly letter to her; he had felt about her the way she felt about Vincent Blatch. People in such a state weren't responsible for what they did. After this, she would be sorrier for people who were in love. She hadn't known. They just couldn't help being fools.

But they needn't give in to it. She wasn't going to. And she didn't want anybody's pity, either. She was going to fight this out by herself.

Nobody, she thought, except Pat, had noticed anything wrong with her.

If she could only stay home—and in bed; love-sick people ought to go to bed like any other kind of invalid—just go to bed and stay there till the fever abated, and they got well, and recovered their appetite, and could talk sense, and knew what they were doing, and were able to think of other things except just one person!

She must stay away from him, and from everything that would remind her of him; absence doesn't make the heart grow fonder—it just hurts for a while, and then it cures the illness.

She had only seen him this one time; she ought to be able to get over that. Suppose she were married to somebody else—to Jim; she'd have to get over it. It wasn't as if she had ever touched him—except his hand, that one time, for just a moment, in shaking hands. He hadn't held her firmly in his arms, nor kissed her with cool lips—

But it was just as bad to be imagining those things! He was too real, in those imaginings; she could feel his touch, hear his voice; it was more real than any reality she had ever known.

Well—it would pass. People did get over these things. Of course they did.

It wasn't any use trying to go to sleep.

She couldn't read.

Her diary—

It might be a good thing to put some of these absurd feelings down in writing. It might help her to get rid of them. And they would be there for her to read and laugh at when it was all over.

She wrote, in shorthand:

"I want him, I want him to kiss me. I love him, I love him, I love him, I want to be in his arms held tight and kissed."

Well, that was enough of that.

Perhaps—the idea thrust itself into her mind—the best way to cure this love-sickness would be to go to him, to have a love-affair.

No—that hadn't worked very well with Pat!

But perhaps if she saw him again, he would seem—just like anybody else.

No that wasn't her own idea—it was one of those crazy

love-thoughts that were tormenting her, a love-thought masquerading as an idea.

What time was it?

Only four o'clock?

Some day—very soon, perhaps—she would be lying here in this bed *not* thinking about Vincent Blatch. She would be at peace, drowsy, not keyed up and aflame. It seemed impossible; but it must be true. This couldn't go on.

II.

Five days later, Janet lay in her bed, drowsy, at peace, not keyed up and aflame.

Her heroic cure had done its work. The rage of the fever had lasted only forty-eight hours. After that, she no longer *felt* the memory of Blatch in her blood and bones. In another day, his image was growing dim in her mind, all except the hands. . . . She was able to read, and know what she was reading. Then Vincent Blatch disappeared from her universe, leaving only her pride in her self-conquest to remind her of him. She was able to see in the paper the account of the little theater upon whose plans Blatch was working with the architect, the theater which Mrs. Royce was to endow—she could see that without a quiver. To-day, by accident, she had seen Blatch himself; and if he didn't seem to her exactly an ordinary person (his hands *were* beautiful), at least he wasn't the man that she had ached to kiss. She didn't even want to touch him. . . . She had been very proud of herself.

But to-night, she wasn't even thinking about Vincent Blatch. She was thinking, drowsily, as she fell asleep, about a nice boy she had met at college. Not met—only become acquainted with at last. He had been at the U. all along. But now they were classmates. His name was Paul Richards.

She fell asleep peacefully with the thought of what an interesting boy Paul Richards was.

CHAPTER FOUR: Paul

I.

PAUL RICHARDS was the son of Professor Richards, the head of the history department. Janet had known Paul very casually for the last two years; and if only casually, that was not to be wondered at, for he wasn't the sort of young man who had previously attracted her attention. He wasn't one of the big handsome fellows whose strength and skill she admired on the football field—and who were so disappointingly awkward and ineffective anywhere else. And he wasn't a dancing man; he had never been to any of the sorority and fraternity parties. It was only in this connection that she had ever particularly heard of him; there was a crowd of frat boys who got up a poker game every time there was a dance, so it was said, and played recklessly all night. They were a beer-drinking, sloppy-dressing, girl-scorning crowd. They were called the "Lit. bunch," because Paul and Douglas Forbes were editors of the Literary Magazine, and some of the others were contributors. Their little world scarcely impinged upon Janet's; she looked through the Lit. whenever it came out, but did not read it except upon those occasions, about once every year, when some mildly outrageous contribution brought rumors of threatening censorship or expulsion. Paul was also the president of a highbrow society, the *Athenæum*. This year he happened to be in one of the special elective courses with Janet. He seemed to her shy rather than scornful; shy only with the girls, it seemed, for on the first day he attracted her attention by contradicting the prof. and arguing with him at length, mentioning authorities of whom nobody except himself and the prof. had ever heard. His fair hair fell in a bang over his forehead; he made a peculiar grimace, twitching his nostrils as though he smelt a bad odor when some one said something stupid; he sprawled lazily in his seat with a bored expression, and his long legs stuck out into the

aisle. When some boy ostentatiously stumbled over his feet, he would withdraw them and stick them out into the other aisle. He talked in class with a peculiar fluency; and when he talked he really became alive.

Janet waylaid him at the door that first day after class, and asked him the name of some book he had mentioned.

"Veblen," he replied. "*The Theory of the Leisure Class.*"

He hurried off as though he were afraid of her.

The second day she stopped him again with another question. She was interested in him and didn't mind making the advances towards acquaintanceship. And again he answered her question—"Tramping with Tramps, by Josiah Flynt"—and turned away abruptly.

But the third day she managed to engage him in conversation, and they went to lunch together at one of the little restaurants near the campus. Thereafter they waited for each other and lunched and talked together regularly.

Having once accepted her company, Paul seemed to take it as a matter of course. And he talked freely in an argumentative way about every question she brought up. She rather prided herself upon the conquest of this shy youth's friendship.

Janet had never quite liked to lunch with the boys at the U., because when a girl came along with them they always insisted on paying for her. As often as not they couldn't really afford it; and besides, it was absurd. Why should they pay for her food? If it were a social occasion and she had been deliberately invited, it would be different. But to have a man pay your carfare or your luncheon check just because you were a girl—it seemed to Janet a ridiculous and offensive demonstration of masculine prerogative. Paul let her pay her own check without protest. That was one of the things she liked about him.

The course they were taking together was in "applied sociology." This included, it was understood, going around to visit jails, prisons, reform schools and such institutions. Janet preferred to get her knowledge that way if possible, rather than out of books. She said so to Paul one day after class. "When do we go to jail? So far as I can see, this is just like any other course. Books again!"

Paul, of course, didn't feel at all that way; and the discussion was continued through lunch. He would rather read about jails than visit them. He knew he ought to visit them—not in order to find out about them, but by way of training his powers of observation, which in turn was a part of the process of learning to write. Actually, he felt rather squeamish about jails.

"Why?" asked Janet in surprise.

"When you've been to a jail, you'll know," he said.

"Have you ever been?"

"No," he admitted, "but I know what they're like."

"What *are* they like?" she asked.

"Think of the men who are there for life."

"I'd rather think of them in there than running around loose outside," said Janet. "After all, they're in *for* something. Murder, usually. I'm not a sentimentalist," she added.

"Dostoevsky," he said, "was sent to Siberia for life. He hadn't murdered anybody. He got himself pardoned by the Czar, and wrote a book about his prison experiences. *The House of the Dead*, it's called. I've just been reading it."

"But this isn't Russia," said Janet. "I suppose Siberia must have been pretty bad. A man named Kennan went there once, didn't he, and wrote about it? I've heard my father speak of Kennan. He knew him."

"Yes, Siberia was pretty bad," said Paul. "But after all, not as bad as the United States. Yes, I mean it! The Russian prisons were filthy and cruel, but they were human. You could talk there, and smoke—you weren't locked up in a little cell all by yourself, and marched to work in a line, and set at a machine where you couldn't speak to anybody else. I'd rather have been in Siberia than in a modern American prison. I've been reading about those, too."

Janet thought that over. "I don't see any great difference," she said, "in marching in line in prison, and marching in line in the army, or in school. And I don't suppose it's any worse to work at a machine all day in prison than anywhere else. And there's lots of places you can't talk—in the assembly-room, or in church. Or smoke, either!" She laughed.

"You've just been proving how bad American life in general is," he said.

"I'll admit," she told him, "I wouldn't want to be cooped up in a little room all by myself—if that's what prison's like."

"You can just take five steps," said Paul. "Five steps forward, and five steps back. And you have to make the steps a little short, or there won't be quite five. Have you read Giovannitti's poem, *The Walker*? It was printed in the Atlantic. Giovannitti was put in jail during a strike."

"No, I haven't read much about jails," said Janet. "I never expected to go to jail, you see. And I'm afraid that's the only way I will ever find out about them—by going. I don't find books very interesting. Do you really like poetry?"

"Yes. Haven't you read *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*? It's by Oscar Wilde."

"Have you read everything ever written about jails?" Janet asked, laughing.

"I'll let up on jails," said Paul, laughing too. "Have you read Shaw's *Heartbreak House*?"

"No. That's a play, isn't it?"

"It is," he said, looking at her rather oddly.

"I expect you're disgusted with my ignorance," she said.

"No—I think it's rather refreshing. At least, you don't pretend. In fact, I think it's rather nice in you."

"Why? I should think there were lots of ignorant people—that can't be very exciting."

"It isn't just that."

"Well, what is it?" Janet was eager to know how she seemed to somebody else.

But Paul found it easier to explain himself. "You see," he said, "I've always read books. And I've never been very much interested in what was going on around me, because there was always something more interesting going on in a book. It made ordinary life seem dull."

"Ordinary life is dull," Janet corroborated.

"But I didn't have to live an ordinary life. I was exploring Africa with Du Chaillu, or going to the moon with H. G. Wells."

"To the moon?" Janet wasn't sure she had understood.

"Yes. The moon's a very interesting place. I'll lend you the book."

"Thanks," said Janet, though she wasn't sure she wanted to read about going to the moon. It sounded rather silly.

"And *that's* the way I've taken out *my* discontent," said Paul, "I've read books. You, on the other hand—"

So he *was* going to talk about her, after all! She leaned forward, elbows on the table, eager to hear.

"You want to have your adventure right here and now, in the actual world. Have you read Freud?"

"No, but I've heard about him. Dreams. Sex. Go on." She didn't want to let Freud interrupt this account of herself.

"That's what I—that's why you impress me. You aren't satisfied with the world. You want to change it."

Janet wondered if that were true. She hadn't ever thought about changing the world. Still—

"I've been called a Bolshevik," she said.

"You *are* one," he assured her.

"But I'm not quite sure I know what the Bolsheviks—"

"That doesn't make any difference. That's theory. Books again. I know the theory. But *I'm* not a Bolshevik. I'm a poet."

"Are you?" She felt a little scornful and a little awed.

"I mean—in my attitude toward life."

"Oh!" She was rather disappointed. Not that she liked poetry; but it would be interesting to see some one who really wrote it, just to know what such a person was like.

"My attitude toward life—"

He had finished with her, it seemed. She wanted to think over what he had said, and see whether she thought it was true. She missed some of what he said about his attitude toward life.

"Have you read *Jurgen*?" he was asking.

"No," said Janet. "But I looked at it. One of the girls had a copy, and it was passed around. But I didn't find anything interesting in it."

"You wouldn't," Paul assured her. "It's merely *Jurgen's* dreams. You don't want to dream—you want to live."

Janet considered that. She liked it. She hoped it *was* true.

"Here's something—" Paul was fishing in a pocket filled with letters and clippings and envelopes covered with scrib-

bling. He took out a small bit cut from a newspaper. "A poem," he said.

Janet felt discouraged. One or two boys at prep had tried to read poetry to her. "What do you see in poetry?" she asked.

"You'll like this," he said. "It's by a new poet named Edna Millay. She hasn't been heard of very much yet. But she will be." He surrendered the slip to Janet.

She read it with a conviction that she wasn't going to understand it.

"Don't you like that?" he asked confidently, after a minute.

Janet did not at once reply. The trouble was, she had a literal mind. The poem was about a candle burning at both ends. She hastily read it again, and then a third time, till it became like a nursery jingle. Something had happened to her mind—perhaps the fear that she was going to seem to Paul a perfect fool. She was about to give it up, when irrelevantly, as it seemed, the image of Pat came into her mind—and then, very oddly, it was as though the poem had suddenly been translated out of a foreign language into one she could understand.

*"My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends,
It gives a lovely light!"*

Paul's question repeated, interrupted her thoughts of Pat, of whose life this poem seemed to have revealed the beautiful and tragic meaning. She handed back the clipping. "I think that's the only poem I ever really liked," she said. "Perhaps it's the only one I ever understood. It's about something real!"

"It's about you," he said, smiling.

"Me!"

"Yes. Isn't it?"

"I'm afraid you're mistaken," she said reluctantly.

And then it was time to go back.

Of course he was mistaken!

Still, it was interesting that he should think that!

2.

Janet considered herself in the mirror of these conversations:—as one who wanted to change things (“smash things,” as he later amended it), as one who wanted to do things and not just dream them, as one whose candle burned recklessly, beautifully, at both ends. . . .

It was fascinating to know how you seemed to others—whether it was true or not.

She wrote in her diary: “Paul says I am one of those who despise dreams and dreamers—not dreams such as people are always talking about and interpreting nowadays, but thinking things and not doing them. I am not sure; at any rate, I do not despise Paul for being a dreamer. I think he is a very unusual person. He intends to be a writer.”

She was amazed at the number of books he had read. When she laughingly told him that he knew more about literature than the English prof., he smiled and said, “That isn’t much!” But it appeared that he did not read French, and wished he could. He had acquired a set of the *Memoirs of Casanova*, and was trying to read them with the aid of a French dictionary, but it was slow work. And Janet, who had never heard of *Casanova*, told him: “I’ll do a sight translation for you if you like. It won’t be very smooth, but—”

Her offer was accepted. Paul suggested that they make a day of it the following Saturday; and she, falling in eagerly with his plans, said she would take the roadster and drive him to the Falls. There wouldn’t be many people there at this season, and they could find a quiet rustic seat in the woods and have coffee and sandwiches at the pavilion, and then come home for dinner in town.

Paul brought along two random volumes of *Casanova*, containing his adventures early and late in life. They found the rustic seat in the woods, and Janet earnestly began to translate. “A love affair,” she said, “how interesting!” Presently she paused, flushing a little, and looked at the cover of the book dubiously. “What sort of book is this?” she asked.

“Haven’t you ever heard of *Casanova*?” Paul asked; and when she said she hadn’t, he explained: “Well, he was an eighteenth-century adventurer. He was imprisoned by the

Inquisition, and made a very daring escape from prison. But he is most famous for his love affairs. He was the lover of innumerable women, and he writes about them all very frankly. That's why I want to read the book. There's an English translation, but it has to be smuggled into this country, and it's very expensive—I've never come across it, and I really doubt if there is a copy in these pure Twin Cities. I found this French edition in a second-hand store." He looked at her curiously. "Of course, if you don't like it—"

"Oh, so long as it's true," said Janet, "I don't mind."

"It's true enough," he assured her.

She went on translating. She had had time to brace herself to the unexpected nature of her task. The flush died away from her face, and her voice was cool. She did not want Paul to think she was a prude. . . .

"What do you think of it?" he asked, when she paused to light a cigarette.

"It's—instructive," she said.

He laughed. "That's an odd thing to say!"

"Well," she defended herself, "everybody is curious about such things. I'm glad he's so frank. But if it's just going to be the same thing over and over, it will be a bore. How many volumes are there?"

"Ten," he said.

She hadn't been quite honest when she spoke of the book's becoming a bore. But she felt obliged to appear as blasé as possible. She felt, moreover, queerly upon her honor to treat this book as "literature," and not to allow it to arouse her own feelings. At first this had been a little difficult; but Paul's impersonal attitude helped her. It was evidently as "literature" that he was interested in it—a book in a language he couldn't read: that was why she was along. It was sufficiently obvious that this wasn't part of some unusual kind of love-making. Nevertheless, it was somewhat of a strain upon her young nerves.

Casanova would have wondered, no doubt, at this spectacle, could he have seen it—this impersonally curious youth, this maiden dutifully translating his amorous adventures, while they sat together, not touching each other, upon a rustic bench.

It was not thus that he, in his time, had made use of the curious designs of Aretino. . . .

"It just goes on and on, doesn't it?" said Janet, pausing for another cigarette.

"Suppose we try the other volume for a change," suggested Paul.

The youthful adventures of this universal lover had had a certain charm. His later adventures were less pleasing. Janet presently put the book down with distaste. "He may have been a famous lover," she said, "but it has become just a habit by this time."

Paul attempted a defense of Casanova. He quoted Havelock Ellis upon him. But she was not to be impressed. "The picture he gives of the immoral life," she said, "is enough to make any one an ascetic!" She was sorry they had brought the book along. It had chilled the warm and eager half-conscious expectations with which she had embarked upon this day with Paul. She wasn't interested in Casanova; she was interested in herself and Paul. Casanova had intruded upon their adventure and spoiled it. She felt resentful toward the book, and toward Paul. . . .

It was true; whatever possibilities there had been of youthful love-making on this occasion had been ruined by Casanova's boldness. It was an example too rash for Paul to live up to, and it made him ashamed of his cowardice. A shy boy, he might have overcome his shyness in Janet's company, but for the presence of Casanova's rakish ghost between them. He had to regard this as a merely literary occasion; and he was grateful to Janet for the cool impersonality of her attitude. "You translate very well," he said.

"Yes, I didn't do it badly, I think," she said. . . . It was time to go. They left their rustic bench with some relief, and drove back to town.

At dinner Paul started to order fried mackerel, when Janet stopped him. "You've ordered some kind of fried fish every single day we've lunched together," she said, "and I can't stand it any longer. You have got to eat something else. Let me order an honest-to-God meal." And so she did—soup, steak, vegetables and dessert. . . .

He was, she reflected that night after they had parted, too

indifferent to the physical side of life. She would see that he ate decent food whenever she was with him. He had a good constitution, and that was lucky for him; but he shouldn't abuse it, or he would go to pieces some day. He drank too much black coffee, and smoked too many cigarettes, and stayed up too late at night. He was proud of being a "night-hawk." He could doubtless write just as well, perhaps better, if he got up early in the morning instead. He liked to think of himself as lazy; but that wasn't true. He worked hard at his writing. He hadn't yet let her see anything he had written, but there was to be something of his in the next Lit. She would get it and read it. . . .

3.

That thing of Paul's in the Lit. turned out to be a poem. "So," thought Janet, "he is a poet after all!" She read it, not quite as poetry, but as something of Paul's. It was called "Fancy-boy."

*"Blue eyes, brown eyes, green-and-gold eyes,
Eyes that question, doubt, deny,
Sudden-flashing sweet young bold eyes,
Here's your answer: I am I!"*

*"Not for you, and not for any
Came I into this man's town—
Barkeep, here's my golden penny,
Come who will and drink it down!"*

*"I'm not one to lend and borrow,
I'm not one to overstay—
I shall go alone to-morrow,
Whistling, as I came to-day!"*

The poem was making something of a sensation on the campus, because of "barkeep," and the president was said to have expressed disapproval of it. It was predicted by some that Paul would be expelled; but that, Janet knew, was nonsense—at the worst he would be called on the carpet. . . . Meanwhile, it seemed to Janet that she knew what the poem

meant. It meant that Paul was afraid that being in love would interfere with his career. And she thought to herself: "I'm glad I'm not the girl that wants him to be in love with her!"

It appeared that Janet was a good critic. At least, a few days later he told her a story which seemed to prove that she was right about the poem. . . . It began by his asking her to select a wedding present.

"For whom?" she asked.

"Oh," he said, "for an old sweetheart of mine." And he seemed to want to tell her about it, so she let him. He had gone with this girl for several years—she was a salesgirl in a department store in St. Pierre; and now she was going to marry the man she had been going with before Paul came along. "You see," Paul explained casually, "we picked each other up at a dance hall. She'd just had a quarrel with him. When she talked of throwing him over, I warned her not to take me too seriously—"

"Why?" asked Janet. "Weren't you in love with her?"

"I liked her well enough," said Paul, "but this fellow wanted to marry her—and I didn't want to stand in the way of that. But she said she was through with him. Anyway, we became sweethearts. . . ."

"You mean—lovers?" asked Janet.

"Well—yes. We were terribly fond of one another, and so it came to that before long. And then—but are you really interested in all this?"

"Yes," said Janet. "Of course. I'd like to know."

"Well, it seems that she began taking the whole thing more seriously after that. I used to carry a book of poems in my pocket most of the time; and sometimes we'd stay at a cheap hotel in White Falls, and I'd feel like reading poetry to her; at first she'd pull my hair and say, 'You funny kid!'—but she got to liking it, and I suppose I seemed romantic to her; anyway, pretty soon she was wanting to get married."

"And you didn't want to marry her?"

"How could I? I can't support myself, let alone a wife."

"But you'll be working at something when you get through college," said Janet. "And in the meantime, she could have kept on working at her job. That is, if you really wanted to be married."

"Well, I really didn't," he said. "Marriage is bound to mean responsibility. I'd have been tied down. If I'm to be a writer, I must see something of the world, and get experience. I don't know that I'll ever marry. I prefer to be foot-loose. You're looking at the thing, of course, from the woman's point of view. But that wasn't the way it began. It began as an adventure. I thought she had the same idea; and so she had till she fell in love with me. But I wouldn't want you to think it was because she was a salesgirl that I didn't want to marry her—or because it all began the way it did. *She* thought maybe that was it. But I'm not so conventional-minded. It's merely that marriage isn't on my program."

"I see," said Janet. "Well, I hope you made that clear to her."

"Yes, I made that clear enough from the start. But she cried one night, and it all came out how she felt about it. And so I had to bust things up."

"I suppose it must have hurt her a bit," said Janet.

"It hurt me, too. But it all turned out all right. She made up with the other fellow."

"And how do you feel—I mean about her, now?"

"I'm over it. I hope she'll be happy. And I don't think it's done her any harm."

"I should think," said Janet, "that having had a poetic lover might make her rather discontented with a husband who wasn't interested in such things."

"Oh, we had dinner together a week or so ago, and she told me she was in love with him more than she'd ever been with me. But she's glad that everything had happened just as it did. I think it's all right. Anyway, I want to give her a wedding present, and I thought you might help me decide what it should be."

"How about a carving set?"

"That would have a certain ironic value," he said; "because of the steaks we've eaten with our fingers on Sundays in the woods. It will symbolize the difference between marriage and—"

"I don't know about that," said Janet, "but I think a carv-

ing set would be appreciated by any bride. Shall I help you pick one out?"

That was at lunch; and that afternoon she went with him to Bowler's in St. Pierre and selected the present for him. "I think," she said, "that she'll be pleased with this."

"I hope," he said, "you don't think I'm being callous about it."

"I think you're behaving very sensibly," she said.

Then they had tea together, and she asked him more about his plans after he finished college.

"I'm thinking," he told her, "of taking a job as steward on a boat going to China, so as to see something of the Orient. I want to get to the South Seas. I'll probably bum around the world for several years, and then write some short stories. I expect to have to be poor for a long time before I'm successful, if I ever am."

"I'm glad," Janet thought to herself, "that *I* have no matrimonial intentions on poor Paul. Any girl that had would be riding for a bad bump!"

4.

It was a few days later that she brought Paul home to dinner for the first time. In her diary she noted: "Brad likes him." Her father, it seemed, had known his grandfather, who had been a farmer. He elicited the young man's interest in writing, and remarked that it was a very interesting illustration of the rapid development of the country that three successive generations had carried a family from pioneering to the arts. And he asked what was the attitude of Paul's father, Professor Richards, toward his literary ambitions.

"Not very sympathetic," said Paul. "He'd like to have me teach."

"His father," said Mr. March, smiling, "wanted him to stay on the farm. You mustn't let yourself be discouraged."

"I shan't," said Paul. "I think my father realizes that he can't make a professor out of me. I've pretty thoroughly demonstrated my laziness and irresponsibility. He's willing to let me go and see what I can make of myself."

After dinner, Janet took Paul to what she called her "study."

It was a new institution, and she called it a "study" because it had to be called something. It was Pen's idea. She had asked if Janet didn't get tired of staying at restaurants all evening. It was true that Paul didn't dance, and when there was dance-music it teased Janet's feet. It was nice of Pen to think of this room. It was simply the nursery, fixed up as a place to take her callers, out of the way of the family. She had arranged it to suit herself, with two big chairs and a sofa and a table, with cigarettes and an electric percolator for making coffee. This would be the first time she had made use of it, but she brought Paul in nonchalantly, seated him in one of the big chairs, took the other opposite him, and waved a hand idly toward the cigarettes on the table. She had been careful to get the kind he smoked. . . . It proved to be not a bad room for talking. Paul was at ease there.

A week later she wrote in her diary: "We kissed each other for the first time last night. It would be very easy to fall in love with Paul. I must be very careful not to."

5.

She had formulated this relationship in her thoughts as a friendship. Certainly she had never known any man so interesting to be with and talk to. She had not consciously considered the possibility of falling in love with him until the moment of that kiss; and afterward it was easy to realize how absurd such a thing would be. But those kisses continued to be disturbing. It was implicitly assumed that they were the natural and inevitable expression of their kind of friendship; at least, they were not accompanied by any verbal declarations of love. They were silent, passionate, unexplained interludes in their evenings of talk. She confided to her diary, at first, certain doubts and good resolutions concerning this practice, so irrelevant to a sober friendship; but presently these references ceased, and the kisses continued, as unexplained as ever.

Another visitor to her study was Jim. He seemed to disapprove of it. "Why do you call it a study?" he asked. She pointed to her text-books. But he said, "It looks more like a loafing place to me." She found his conversation, after Paul's, not interesting enough to spend her evenings with him at

home. But she did like to dance with him. They went once or twice a week. Sometimes he came to dinner, and perhaps the next evening Paul would be there, sitting in the same place; she couldn't help wondering what Pen and Brad thought of it all. At any rate, they kept their hands off the situation, which was nice of them. Jim hadn't said anything more about marriage, and she was glad of that. He knew, though he hadn't mentioned it, of her friendship with Paul. So far she had managed to keep them apart. It would be fun to see Jim glower at Paul; but he was sulky enough as it was. He couldn't say she wasn't being fair to him; she had been seeing more of him than ever since Paul came along. Paul, of course, didn't care whom else she played around with. She thought Jim's jealous airs very silly; she was glad Paul wasn't possessive.

Paul, she had found out, was really a lonely sort of boy, who did not make friends easily. She appeared to be one of the three people in White Falls that he cared about. One of these was Douglas Forbes, an editor of the *Lit.* whom she didn't like. The other was an old maid, Miss Rankin. Janet had heard of Miss Rankin; she was well-to-do and rather eccentric and unconventional. When a new musician came to town to give a concert, or a novelist or poet to lecture, she would carry him off to tea at her house; and there must have been something attractive about her, because when these celebrities came to town again they always went to see her. That was somewhat the way Paul himself had become acquainted with her; after that poem in the *Lit.* and all the fuss there was about it, she had asked him to tea, and they had been friends ever since. From all accounts Janet concluded that it wasn't her looks that constituted the attraction; she was said to be nearly forty, and rather plain. But according to Paul she was a real person and understood poetry. . . . Janet said to herself that she was glad Paul was loyal to her and didn't mind her eccentricities.

6.

Jim had begun to annoy her with his jealousy. She told him haughtily that there was no reason to be jealous; she wasn't in love with Paul, nor he with her.

"You are spending all your time with him," said Jim resentfully.

"No more than with you," she said, "and I'm not in love with you."

"From what I gather," said Jim, "it's a little more than a friendship."

Janet flushed slowly. Had Paul talked about their kisses? If he had told Douglas Forbes, *he* might have told. She felt terribly angry—but her anger was against Douglas Forbes, and Jim: not against Paul.

"You have no right to pry into my affairs," she said coldly.

"I have a natural interest in your private affairs," he said uncomfortably but doggedly, "inasmuch as I've asked you to be my wife." He was on his dignity, and he seemed to her quite absurd.

"I'm ready to give you my answer now," she said, "so that you can cease to interest yourself in what I do. The answer is No."

And when he had gone, she wondered what Paul *had* said about her. . . . But Paul, next evening, declared he had said nothing about her to anybody. She was relieved, and yet in some way disappointed. She knew he hadn't talked about her in any way she could object to; but he might have said *something*. . . .

She was both pleased and annoyed when a few days later it appeared that he had talked with Miss Rankin about her, and Miss Rankin wanted him to bring her to tea. She was sure that she and Miss Rankin would not like one another, but she went out of curiosity and to please Paul. It was not a pleasant call. It seemed to her, perhaps erroneously, that her hostess had tried to make her ridiculous in Paul's eyes by showing up her ignorance of literature. Paul explained to her afterward that "Madame Bovary" was a book and not, as she had been led to suppose, an author. The mistake sat lightly on Janet's conscience, since she had made no false pretensions; she had merely said, "No, I haven't read anything of hers," when the lady was mentioned. Paul had been under no illusions as to her knowledge in that realm; nor, indeed, had he seemed to mind her mistake. What bothered her was the way Miss Rankin treated Paul. She made a great fuss

over him, as though he were very wonderful. Well, so he was—but it wasn't good for him to be talked to that way. Miss Rankin behaved as though he were already a celebrity. Janet said to herself: "Paul has his celebrity still to fight for. She would make him lazy and self-satisfied if she had her way about it." She reflected also that Miss Rankin ought to be married and having babies of her own instead of trying to make babies out of grown men. . . .

An invitation from Paul's mother followed. It was transmitted somewhat unwillingly by Paul. "You won't like it," he said; "but she's heard I'm going around with you, and she wants to look you over. No doubt to see," he added, smiling, "if you have the qualities she would approve in a daughter-in-law. I could tell her you haven't, but she'll want to see for herself."

"How absurd," said Janet.

"Isn't it!" he agreed.

The invitation was for dinner. Janet had never seen Mrs. Richards before. It seemed to her that Paul's mother explained something she hadn't quite understood about Paul. She was a rather terrible person—sweetly terrible. She wouldn't let him alone for a minute. She criticized everything he did, in that sickly-gentle but ruthlessly persistent way of hers. She even criticized his table-manners publicly, though there was nothing to criticize. Under this dulcet nagging he was fretful and sulky. It must be awful, she thought, to have a mother like that. She had subdued poor old Professor Richards, until he was merely a shadow in his own house. She wouldn't, thought Janet, have so easy a time subduing Paul. But no wonder he wanted to run away to the South Seas!

7.

On the street, one winter day of the new year, she saw Vincent Blatch. She was interested to note that the sight of him evoked not a quiver in her. He remained, however, an interesting figure. . . . She had heard that his little theater project was in difficulties. An architect had declared that his ideas were utterly impracticable—that the kind of stage he wanted

would cost a million dollars, and then wouldn't work the way he thought it would. Janet felt sorry for him. He did not look as young as he had seemed the first time she had seen him. And he seemed worried. No wonder! . . . Paul said the architect was a fool; but how could Paul know?

She had been thinking a great deal about Paul. She didn't see why he had to bum around the world for several years before he could write. He was writing now; why couldn't he keep on? Why did artists—she had learned to think of Paul as an "artist"—feel that they must go to the ends of the earth to be free? A painter named Paul Gauguin had gone to the South Seas to paint; and Paul Richards thought he had to go to the South Seas to write. Paul Gauguin was his god at present. It seemed rather silly to her. Talking about his career in their long evenings together, he had said he might get a job on a newspaper in New York while he wrote his first novel. Why, then, couldn't he get a newspaper job to start with? If he worked on a newspaper here, that would help him to get a newspaper job later on in New York. It might not be so easy to get a newspaper job in New York when the time came. Nor did she think he would find bumming around the South Seas as interesting in reality as in fancy. It was only one of his dreams. For he was a dreamer; and he was lazy. One night he had said:

"College is really a waste of time for a man who wants to be a writer."

And she had demanded: "Then why have you wasted four years? If I felt the way you do, I'd have left college and gone to the South Seas long ago! It's just a way of putting things off. You're twenty-one years old. At that age, my grandfather March was earning his own living and saving his pennies to build a fortune with; that was *his* dream, and he worked for it. If you really want to go to the South Seas so much, I wish you'd go!"

To this outburst he had only replied: "Ah, now you are beginning to find me out!"

In her diary she wrote: "I want him to do *something*. He isn't even trying to write. He hasn't written a line for months."

She wondered if it were possible that she was becoming

jealous of Miss Rankin. That did not seem possible; because she wasn't in love with Paul. But she hated that woman. She was spoiling Paul. She was killing all his possibilities of ever making something of himself—by praise. "I," said Janet to herself fiercely, "shan't praise him until he does something!"

She managed for some time to conceal her feelings about Miss Rankin. But one evening she said to Paul: "You've been to Miss Rankin's for tea this afternoon."

"Yes," he answered. "Why not?"

"No reason why not," she said. That wasn't the point. The point was that she could always tell. Last night he had been discontented with himself. To-night he was purring like a sufficiently petted kitten.

But some unconscious bitterness in the tone of her remark held his attention. "You don't like her," he said.

"No. Nor she me, for that matter."

"I mean—you don't like me to go there," he said.

"I've no wish to dictate where you shall go."

"No," he said, surprisingly, "but perhaps you're right. She praises me too much. I like it at the time. But afterward I resent it. It makes the real world harder to meet."

"So you realize that, do you?" she asked.

"Of course. That's why I come to you."

"Oh!"

"I mean," he said, "there's something real about you."

"I hope so," she said.

"So real," he went on, "that sometimes I'm afraid of you."

"Afraid? Why?"

But he wouldn't say; and then their argument took a quasi-impersonal turn, and was presently interrupted by irrelevant kisses. She had ceased to trouble herself about those kisses. Life was in some respects too complicated and contradictory to try to understand.

Their quasi-impersonal argument had concerned "the artist" and his relations with "women." And now, returning to that argument, Janet said:

"You've told me what the artist doesn't want of women. But what *does* he want?"

"Love—" he said.

"Really?"

"Of a sort," he concluded.

"Oh! Only of a sort?"

"Not the kind that would lead to marriage, and babies, and all that sort of thing. Not the kind that would tame him. . . ."

"You've made that clear already. But what's the other sort?"

"As a vagabond," said Paul, "the artist must look for girls who have something of the vagabond spirit in them. . . ."

"And when he has found one—?" asked Janet.

"They go gypsying together," he said.

"Gypsying?" she repeated. "That's poetry. In prose, I suppose it means that she becomes his mistress. Is that it?"

"Rich men have mistresses," he said. "Vagabonds can't afford such a luxury."

"His sweetheart, then? Or—lovers?"

"Sweethearts are expected to marry each other," he objected.

"The artist," she said mockingly, "seems to be terribly afraid of that!"

"Afraid of his own folly, even more than hers," said Paul.

"He would be human enough to *want* to marry her."

"Would he?" she asked, looking up at him.

"He would. . . . But he oughtn't to."

That was the nearest he ever came to a declaration.

"Not," he went on, "if he was to keep on being an artist."

"She'd probably see the point—if he explained it to her often enough," said Janet. "She'd want to help him be an artist. She'd want to be friends with him. Wouldn't that be enough—for him?"

"Friendship—yes; but a friendship that included everything that belonged to them."

"Kisses?"

"Everything."

"And still he'd call it friendship?"

"Boon companionship. The sex barrier let down. A gay carelessness about it."

Janet was silent and thoughtful. At last she said: "And their gypsying—what would that be, in plain prose? I suppose

some people would call it sneaking off to cheap hotels together, Paul."

"The hotels *would* be cheap," he answered. "There'd be nothing magnificent about their vagabond love. But they wouldn't mind even the word 'sneaking.' They'd know that they live in an ugly and hateful and brutal world. They'd know they were powerless to fight it openly. They'd be content to break its stupid rules in secret, and hide like the hunted criminals that the world thinks them. They'd have made their choice; they'd have refused to be the slaves of that world, and they'd be content to be fugitives, snatching whatever beauty and happiness they could. They wouldn't be too proud for that. They'd know that all beauty is doomed—they'd take and give their kisses joyously and carelessly on the edge of doom. They'd be grateful to the blind, stupid gods that rule this meaningless chaos, for giving them so much of happiness. . . ."

Janet was shaken. "Would it mean so much to him?" she asked.

"The question would be, rather, how much did it mean to her," he said. "She would have to come to him freely. It would be for her to decide. . . ."

"Oh!" said Janet, awakened from the spell of his words. "So he wouldn't even take the responsibility of—of seducing her. . . ."

"No," he said.

"I don't like these third-person conversations," she said abruptly.

"I'm sorry," he said. But he didn't accept the challenge to speak plainly; and presently it was time for him to go.

"Well," said Janet to herself when he had gone, "if he thinks that's the way to get me, he's mistaken!"

She told herself that it wasn't because she was afraid, it wasn't because of any moral scruples. It was simply that she wasn't sure she loved him. Perhaps there was something he could say that would make her sure of that. But he hadn't said it. He hadn't said the right things at all!

8.

But whatever it was that Paul might have said, that would have made her his sweetheart, he didn't say it. In truth,

he was afraid of falling too much in love with her. It was perhaps absurd that a girl like Janet and a boy like Paul should ever have troubled each other. But they meant something to one another, beyond what they knew. To him, she was the destiny by which he was at once allured and frightened. He might or might not have become a poet; but marriage with her would have made a man of him. And it was the sick child in him that feared this fate. To her, he was what her father had wanted to be, what she had recognized in Brad under his practical exterior—something beautiful and groping, that needed guidance and help. It was the child in her who saw that in Paul; but there was in her a woman, too, who demanded strength and certainty, who needed to be wooed as a man would woo her. This boy hadn't even dared ask for her love. He didn't want it. He was afraid of it. . . . And perhaps Janet was not wrong in blaming Miss Rankin for his cowardice. When Janet had first known Paul, he had had different possibilities; he might have become a manly lover. Miss Rankin had fostered the child in him too much. . . . And so it was that Janet waited, and Paul did not speak again of their love—in any terms. Sometimes she fiercely thought to herself, "If he asks me outright to go with him to a hotel, I will." And when he did not, she secretly despised him for a coward. Again, she would coldly tell herself that it was just as well he said nothing, since she did not love him. . . .

But meanwhile they drifted into a relationship which was an approximation of "boon companionship," in its spiritual aspects at least. Despising him, she became tolerant of his weaknesses, and preferred to forget them. He would talk of the things he was going to do, and she would forbear to criticize these dreams in her accustomed realistic manner. She would take them at their face value, and presently she was able to respond to them as enthusiastically as though they were real. Once he paid her the compliment of saying that she was as much fun to talk to as "another man." So this, she thought, was the sort of thing he and Douglas Forbes indulged themselves in over their beer—these pipe dreams!

As long as she could forget it was all just talk and dreaming, and that there wasn't any likelihood of his ever doing any of the splendid things he talked and dreamed about, she could be

happy enough. But she had to put some feminine conscience within her to sleep as with a drug. She said to herself afterwards that she felt as though she had been smoking opium. She wrote in her diary: "We sit there like a couple of dopes, smoking our enchanted cigarettes, feet on the table, talking beautiful nonsense. But it doesn't mean a damn thing. I'm as bad as his Miss Rankin."

And a later entry, in February, confessed: "I can't be a good dope after all. No use trying."

It was true. She wasn't "a good dope." She wouldn't have been, for Paul, his desired "boon companion." She was a woman, and she wanted him to be a man and a lover.

Nothing had happened; nothing was to happen. It wasn't a melodramatic sort of heartbreak. She didn't even know that her heart was breaking. Sometimes she persuaded herself that she didn't love Paul, had never loved him. At other times she knew better, and called herself a fool. She was as "sporting" about it as possible. . . . And as she ceased to be a "good dope," she lost that last hold upon him, and he slipped more securely under the influence of Miss Rankin's kind and enthusiastic mothering. Janet wrote in her diary: "I feel as though I were seeing somebody slowly smothered. And he likes it. God!" And: "There *was* something worth while about Paul six months ago. I *hate* that woman."

Nothing happened; things drifted on for a while. A clean break would have been more artistic—and would have hurt less. But life is sometimes messy. This tragedy had no dignity whatever. Paul kept on coming occasionally—enough for her to witness his gradual disintegration. But he never spoke even of "going gypsying" again. What girl's love ever suffered so utterly ridiculous, so humiliatingly farcical, a hurt? It wasn't anything that could be spoken of; it couldn't even be faced by the victim. But sometimes she thought of that girl he had bought the carving set for—and felt utterly humiliated. He hadn't argued with that girl; he had made love to her.

9.

A conversation, in March, with Vincent Blatch, is relevant to this situation. It was preceded by some entries in her diary:

"It seems that Vincent Blatch is up the spout. His grand scheme has fallen through entirely. Even Aunt Dolly has no use for him any more. Everybody says he is just a charlatan. I wonder."

"I want to see Blatch before he goes, and talk with him. I'm really sorry for him, if no one else is, and now that he hasn't a friend in town I'd like to be a little bit friendly."

"Vincent Blatch goes to-morrow. I must see him. If Miss Rankin can call on celebrities, I guess I can call on a discredited charlatan. I have a feeling that it will help to straighten me out about Paul."

The next day, Janet was saying to herself: "I shouldn't have waited so long. He'll have no time to-day. He'll be packing or something." Nevertheless she had cut her last class for the day, gone to a drug store and was telephoning the Brinton in St. Pierre, where Vincent Blatch was staying.

His voice came cool and pleasant over the wire: "This is Vincent Blatch."

"This is Janet March." She paused on that to see whether he remembered.

He did. His greeting had a note of familiarity in it, quite as though they were old friends.

She presumed on that. "I hear you're leaving to-night," she said. "And I wondered if you could possibly take tea with me this afternoon." She had intended to say something about getting some information from him in connection with an essay on The Shakespearean Stage—a pure invention. But it didn't seem to be necessary.

"I'll be very glad to," he said. "At what time? Four?"

She said three-thirty would be still better if that were convenient for him. It was convenient. She named the St. Pierre grill. That was the only public place where she had ever been to tea and she didn't want to hunt up any strange place as though she were ashamed of what she were doing.

She took the car to St. Pierre and arrived at the St. Pierre grill just at three-thirty. He was waiting in the lobby. To-day he didn't look worried. Perhaps it was a relief to him to have the fate of his theater settled one way or the other. She shook hands with him. He didn't seem surprised or curious in the

least. He distinctly was treating her as though she were an old friend.

And that, oddly enough, was just how she felt, as they went in and sat down at their table and smiled at each other across it.

After all, she said to herself, she had a right to feel that way. Hadn't she been in love with him? And a man you've been in love with isn't exactly a stranger!

"I was glad you called me up," he said. "I had just been working on some ideas for stage-settings, and I wanted to show them to somebody." He took from his pocket a half-dozen small pieces of cardboard and tossed them over. Each one had a tiny scene painted on it in water-colors.

"They're lovely," said Janet. "Especially this one!"

He shook his head. "That one's no good. The others are lovely, if you like."

Janet laughed. It was exactly like Paul, when his poems were being criticized.

"If I had said, 'They're lovely all except this one,' you would have said, 'That one's the best of the lot!' Wouldn't you?" And she gave them back.

"And why not?" he asked. "If I say it's so, it's so. The point about these scenes is one you've missed entirely. They merely show what can be done with my stage. The theater requires a new means of securing the old Elizabethan effect—a rapid change of scene, unbroken by delays for scene-shifting. Reinhardt in Berlin—"

"Tea," said Janet to the waiter. She had heard about Blatch's stage. "And—do you like cinnamon toast?"

"With strawberry jam," he said.

"Plain buttered toast and strawberry jam and some marmalade," said Janet to the waiter.

"And cream for my tea," he said.

"Milk for his tea," said Janet. "And lemon for mine.—Are you sure you wouldn't rather have coffee?"

"Yes, I would rather!"

"So would I. A pot of coffee for two. And some kind of sandwiches instead of toast and jam. Yes, Swiss cheese will do very well.—I wish I could give you beer," she said to Vincent Blatch.

He grinned. "How well you understand me! But the coffee will do."

"I thought," she said, "that the theater had gone—" She hesitated for a discreet word.

"Blooley!" he said cheerfully. "Dead and buried. And forgotten already. These lovely scenes, I'm sorry to tell you, will never be seen in St. Pierre. But, fortunately, St. Pierre is not the only town in which to build theaters. Nor," he said, looking like a spiteful and mischievous little boy, "the only town in which there are elderly ladies with money who think they are interested in the arts!"

"Well, what's the lucky town?" Janet asked. "Or is that a secret? Or is there any town yet? What are you going to do? I read in the papers that you were going to Chicago, that's all I know."

"Chicago—yes. I believe something can be done there. I began planning on Chicago three months ago, when I saw how things were going here. I think I have things lined up there." He looked at his sketches caressingly, and put them back in his pocket.

"Why," asked Janet, "isn't St. Pierre ever to see those lovely scenes? Whose fault is it?"

He grinned. "Oh, it's my fault! Let me tell you a story. It isn't about me. It's about a friend of mine—Bill Hand. Bill's a musician. He got the job of conducting an orchestra in a town like this. They gave him a big party. It was at the house of a millionaire who was supposed to be interested in music. After dinner the old boy showed off his treasure—a genuine Stradivarius, in a glass case. 'Let's see it,' said Bill. He handled it, with the old boy looking on anxiously as if he was afraid Bill would break it! 'Yes, it's the real thing,' Bill said to him, 'and why the hell isn't it in my orchestra? You think you love music, God damn your lousy soul—and you keep a Strad in a glass case!' And he walked out of the house. Now, that wasn't tactful, was it? That isn't the way to get on with rich old boobs that think they love music—is it? No!"

Janet laughed.

"I'm not as bad as Bill. I never say things like that. Believe me, I never uttered one single cuss-word to your Aunt Dolly. I was all sweetness and light—for three months I was

so God damn sweet to everybody—! But not quite sweet enough. Not to every little whipper-snapper. Not to that fool architect. That was where the trouble started. And then I began to slide. I told your Uncle John some things. I told him a theater wasn't like a flour-mill. And a few other things. I wasn't respectful, I'm afraid. So that was the end of me. That's just how much interested they are in art—about as much as I am in flour. Well, what's St. Pierre to me? Let 'em keep their old flour-mills. I'll build my theater somewhere else."

The coffee and sandwiches arrived.

"This is good," said Vincent Blatch, taking a bite and a sip.

"But why," she asked, "*can't* you get along with people like that? After all, they've got the money—and you'll have to deal with just that sort of people in Chicago. They're the same everywhere."

"That's true enough," he admitted. "This isn't the first time I've dealt with them. I've *almost* built my theater in five different cities in the past ten years." He laughed. "And it's the same story every time."

"The trouble, I think, is—you don't have to be so *sweet*," said Janet. "That might please Aunt Dolly, but it wouldn't impress Uncle John. As a matter of fact, I doubt if you *were* so terribly sweet. You're the first person who's said so. It was all in your mind. But the point is, you don't need to hurt yourself trying to be. All you have to do is talk business. They want to know how much a thing is going to cost, and be assured of some results. They understand business—"

"My dear young woman," said Vincent Blatch, "I have heard all that advice before. And it is all rot. In the first place, this theater of mine is *not* a good business proposition. Art seldom is. Art is kept going by people like myself, who are so lacking in good business sense that they spend years trying to do something, not because there is money in it but simply because it appeals to them. There are no assured results in art. The way to make money in the theater is to stick to the old familiar hokum. I know that. And they know it. They don't want me to lie to them about the business aspect of the thing. I'll give them credit for that—they don't want to be told there is money in it for them. No, they want to be persuaded that they are lovers of art! And that's the second

point. They *aren't* lovers of art—they don't care a damn about art; and it makes me sick to have to kid them along and pretend that I think they do care."

"How do you know they don't?"

"How do I know anything? *You* haven't been pretending to me that you loved art, or I shouldn't be sitting here telling you the honest truth—I'd be kidding you along. If I thought it was worth my while." He laughed. "You haven't any of the March millions at your disposal, have you? If so, I'll change my tactics."

"The March millions are much exaggerated, I think," said Janet. "Anyway, I haven't any of them. Not a single measly million. So you can keep on telling me the truth. I like it."

"You're different from the others," said Vincent Blatch.

"Am I? Or are you just—kidding me along? I'd like to think I was different."

"Yes, you are."

But after this promising opening, and a still more auspicious thoughtful pause, he went on to talk about himself. "I'll admit," he said, "that I am prejudiced against people who have money. I want that money. I could do beautiful things with it. And they never will."

"How about the Medici?" suggested Janet learnedly.

"Don't make me laugh," said Vincent Blatch. "The idea of your Uncle John, or your Uncle Eddie, either, as Lorenzo the Magnificent—appeals to my sense of humor."

"Why pick on my relations?" said Janet. "There are other folks in St. Pierre."

"I'm doing it for your benefit," he said. "Just to be companionable. It's what you get for lecturing me. What do you know about it, anyway? Have you ever known an artist?"

The orchestra had started to play, and couples were leaving their tables to dance. Janet looked wistfully at the dancing space, and tapped her fingers on the table in time to a bar of the music. "You don't dance?" she said, ignoring his question.

"No, I don't."

"The interesting men never do," she complained. "Why is that? Is it a tradition of the artistic career? I should think they'd like it."

"They'd rather talk—and drink," he said. "As for dancing,

that means beauning some girl around, being a ladies' man. Some artists don't mind that. But others do!"

"Yes," she said, deciding to answer his question, "I do know an artist. That is—he's a poet."

"They're the worst kind," said Vincent Blatch. "You aren't in love with him, are you?"

"Why?"

"Well—my advice is, don't be."

"Why not?"

"You ought to know why not—if you're really acquainted with the fellow at all. Poets don't make good husbands."

"I don't care about *that*," said Janet. "I don't want a husband. But, can't a poet be a—a *man*?"

"Oh, so you've been lecturing your poet, too! No, a poet *can't* be a man. Don't try to make one out of him. It won't work."

"Why?"

"What do you mean—a *man*? Tell me that, first."

"I mean—all sorts of things. It's true I've been lecturing him, as you call it. I want him to be sensible. There's no point in—a poet doesn't *have* to starve, does he?"

"Is he starving?"

"Not a bit of it. He's letting his family take care of him. But he doesn't ever intend, so far as I can see, to do anything to take care of himself. And that means either that he'll let somebody take care of him all his life—or else he *will* starve."

"And that doesn't strike you as a manly attitude?"

"It doesn't, no. Does it you?"

"Let me tell you another story. This *is* about myself. I was in New York, without a job, and without money. I bought a paper every morning and looked at the ads."

Janet nodded. She remembered her own experience.

"And then I went to the places to ask for a job. I would get as far as the door. I would put my hand on the door-knob. And there I would get stuck—frozen—held motionless with a kind of stubborn pride, mixed with terror. I couldn't turn the knob. I just couldn't make myself go in. So I would say to myself, I won't try here, I'll go to that other place. And I'd go away, and walk to the next place, making up my mind what I would say *when* I asked for the job. And there, at

the next place, I would go through the same thing over again. Maybe that's why I hate people with money so. I knew I was infinitely more valuable to the world than they were—yes, even if I never accomplished a thing, if none of my ideas ever worked out—even so, I was a civilized human being, and they were pigs. And I had to ask *them* for the privilege of remaining alive! And they might look at me and refuse. Or they might look at me and give me a job I hated. That was what galled me, the thought that they had it in their power to condemn me to starvation, or to slavery, as they chose. And perhaps I was more afraid of the slavery than of the starvation. You see, my dear, I am one of those persons, of whom you have heard, who think that the world owes them a living." He grinned at her ferociously.

"How *did* you live?" asked Janet.

"A practical question. I borrowed. I borrowed, and did not pay back. From men who could ill spare the dollar, or the five dollars, that I made them give me. They were working. *They* would have liked to loaf, too. It was unjust, I admit. But, after all, they also could have loafed, if they hadn't minded seeing their wives and babies starve to death. They couldn't do that, so they worked; and they couldn't see me starve either, so they gave me a dollar when I asked for it. And the funny thing—"

He paused, and looked beyond Janet into the past. The waiter cleared the table and went away.

"The funny thing is," said Vincent Blatch, "that a girl wanted to marry me. Down and out as I was—or all but. And I didn't have to support her—she had money, or her family did."

"Then why didn't you marry her?" asked Janet.

"I'll tell you. But first let me tell you about our courtship. I couldn't afford to take her to the theater; so she took me. I couldn't even pay for our dinners; so she paid. And when it was raining, she paid for the cab."

"Well, why not?" said Janet.

"No reason why not; and two reasons why—she could pay, and I couldn't. But I didn't like it, just the same. An artist isn't much of a man, perhaps; not enough of a man to get a job so he can pay for theater tickets and dinners and taxis for

his beloved—but enough of a man, nevertheless, to hate having *her* pay for them!”

“I don’t see why,” said Janet, remembering the occasional luxuries beyond the means of a professor’s son, which she had paid for, in going around with Paul. He hadn’t seemed to mind. And she had been happy to do it. Were all men as silly as that? She had thought Paul wasn’t.

“I let her buy me a winter overcoat,” said Vincent Blatch. “Except for that I might have married her. But that was too much. Oh, I wore the overcoat. What could I do? I had none. Not that I’ve minded accepting presents from women. I’ve accepted many things from them since that time, and I haven’t minded at all. But I haven’t been in love with them.” The waiter brought the check. He waved it toward her, and laughed. “You see, I’m shameless. But then, I’m not in love with you, my dear.” Which may have sounded odd to the waiter.

Janet watched the waiter go away, and then said: “Do you know that I was in love with you, once?” It was strange and rather thrilling to say that, calmly, across a café table.

“Were you? No, I didn’t know. I thought you didn’t like me. You avoided me.”

“That was why. I was in love with you for five days—or nearly.”

“That’s what I *don’t* understand,” he said. “What girls want with men like me. I wouldn’t have married you, you know!”

“Why not?” She smiled. “Not even if the fabled March millions were real?”

“Oh, I’ve thought of the March millions. And also of Uncle John March, and Uncle Eddie March—who is worse than John, because he considers himself a man of the world and a connoisseur—and Aunt Dolly Royce; no, thank you!”

“Father isn’t so bad,” she said.

“I trust not. You’re his daughter. But to be a son-in-law—that would frighten me.”

“Just what are you afraid of?” Janet asked. “I really want to know.”

“I don’t mind telling you. I’m afraid of my American conscience. I didn’t know it, when I was in love with the

girl I told you about; but that was the real trouble. It's hard enough to be an artist if you're an American, born and bred to honest self-respecting labor. It's hard enough if you're free; still, you *can* be a bum if you want to badly enough. But with a wife, and a family-in-law, looking on; waiting every day, *so* patiently, for you to get to work; perfectly willing for you to be an artist—very proud of you, in fact; asking only one thing, the thing that all America asks, and that no artist can guarantee—results!—it's too much of a handicap. My conscience wouldn't stand the strain; I wouldn't murder my wife or run away to the South Seas—" ("The South Seas again," thought Janet. "It's an obsession with them!") "No—I'd reform, go to work, become a decent, respectable, God-fearing bourgeois; I'd depart regularly every morning at nine o'clock for my office, in a stiff white linen collar; I'd vote on election day, and go to church, and read the Sunday papers; I'd have a large family, deplore the viciousness of the younger generation, and try to bring up my children to be good, pure women and brave, honest men!"

"It wouldn't be your wife's fault if you were so silly as all that," said Janet.

"No—but I should blame her just the same, whenever I got drunk and remembered what I had wanted to be when I was young. You can't help being our consciences!" he said.

"Can't we—if we try not to be?" Janet asked.

"Not if you try—only if you are that sort. And few women are. Those few—they're not real women. They're more like men. They're—"

"Boon companions?" suggested Janet.

"Yes—boon companions. With them one can forget all responsibilities, the same as with one of the boys over a drink or two. I imagine Cleopatra was that sort—a boon companion. Not a siren. You know, the authentic pictures of her don't show her as beautiful. She wouldn't have to be. No, she was a good fellow—that was all; and that was why Antony thought the world well lost for her company. He was an artist who had tried to be a good bourgeois. But what business was it of his to fight the world's battles? Why should he care who won at Actium?"

"Do you think I could be like that?" Janet asked.

He frowned at her. "Why should you? You've no need to. You're not really in love with an artist, are you?"

"What if I were?"

"Then marry him and reform him. There are too many artists in America. It needs more honest, hard-working citizens. He's young, I hope? Then there's time to tame him." He looked at his watch. "Five o'clock. I've got to go."

They went out. "Do you know Miss Rankin?" Janet asked. "Is she that type—the boon companion? Is that why artists like her?"

"She? No—she's a mother to us. The unselfish mother-type. Artists are babies, too, you know."

"Must they be?"

He smiled. "They *are*," he said. "Can I take you anywhere? I'm taxi-ing back to my hotel."

"I'm going the other way." She held out her hand. "I've learned a lot. Thank you."

"Good-by, then. And come and see me in Chicago if you're there this summer."

"Good-by. Perhaps I shall."

10.

That talk had been very interesting to Janet; but it didn't help her much. Paul was still Paul—and she, worse luck, was in love with him. "Marry and tame him," Vincent Blatch had said. Perhaps that was possible; it might easily be possible, if she began by accepting those vague third-person proposals. He could scarcely back out. But she didn't want to *take* him; she knew now that she wanted him to *want* her as a lover, wanted him to care whether she loved him or not. She wanted him to be willing to work and suffer for her—yes, be willing to give up something for her sake! Was that unreasonable of her? Anyway, that was too deep a feeling to be ignored. It involved her self-respect. And it was plain that, on any self-respecting terms, she couldn't have him.

He was lost to her. Lost, quite as much as if he were dead. He did seem dead to her sometimes. Or old—older than anybody could be who was really alive. He didn't believe in anything, or really want anybody—not enough to hurt. And

she was young and wanted everything. She wanted Paul and happiness. And she couldn't have them. . . . She was twenty-one years old, and the unhappiest girl in the world.

"I'm going to try to forget," she wrote in her diary.

And presently, in the effort to forget, she went on a party with Fitzi and her newest beau and another man named Shelk. Janet, it appeared, had been asked along to entertain Shelk, who had a soap-factory and lots of money.

He was about fifty years old, and getting fat, but he was anxious to learn all the newest dances. They went to several restaurants in the course of the evening, and Shelk bought many cocktails, which were served in teacups. Janet felt rather sorry for Shelk, and tried to be nice to him, though she drew the line at being kissed by a stranger. After one o'clock, when the restaurants were supposed to be closed, they went to those that surreptitiously stayed open—Fitzi's beau being admitted freely. Champagne was served behind the locked doors, and after Fitzi's beau had a certain amount of champagne he explained the party to Janet. "Shelk pays," he said; "that's what Shelk is for. You don't suppose I could finance a party like this, do you, on thirty-five a week? The best I can do is take Fitzi to the movies; when I want to show her a real good time, I call up Shelk and tell him I'll bring along a couple of peacherinos."

"So I'm Shelk's peacherino," said Janet.

"Yes; and you're stringing him along fine."

"I'm not stringing him along; I'm just sorry for him."

"Well, just keep on being sorry for him."

The latter part of the occasion passed in somewhat of a haze for Janet, but she retained her wits sufficiently to be very firm with Shelk about not wanting to be kissed. . . . She stayed at Helen's, where she was supposed to be spending the evening; and she reflected the next morning that one could drink quite a good deal of champagne and be none the worse for it.

Soon after that Jim came back in a very humble mood. She was rather cruelly ruthless with him. Her own unhappiness did not make her at all sympathetic with his.

There was another Shelk party, which she resolved should be the last. She had to slap Shelk's face, and had a headache

next morning from too many drinks. She wrote in her diary: "I am ashamed of myself. I've always despised men for behaving like this when they are hurt in a love-affair, and I am acting the very same way. Perhaps, however, it is human nature. But I am ashamed of myself just the same."

Boredom overcame her resolutions, and she went out on another Shelk party. And, to her intense disgust, Shelk asked her to marry him. It seemed that this proposal was due to Janet's having slapped his face last time; that convinced him that she was a good girl. "That fat old man!" thought Janet. How dare he think of marrying her? Life was made loathsome by the thought. "If life is like this," she thought, "how can I stand thirty or forty years more of it?" At any rate, there would be no more Shelk parties. Fitzi could find somebody else to make a foursome after this—and the soap man could find some other "good" girl to marry.

Her diary noted: "A letter from Vincent Blatch. I've answered it."

There was a party at Fitzi's house, and Janet stayed there for the night; and the two girls in their nightgowns talked confidentially: or at least Fitzi did. Janet learned that Fitzi was still a virgin, and reflected that that showed how foolish it was for people to jump to conclusions about other people's morals. Nevertheless, she had had an adventure the previous spring, which she related to Janet with gusto and giggles. She had been going with a boy named Eugene. Janet had met him somewhere—a romantic young fellow, not the kind that she liked; but he had appealed to Fitzi's tastes, and she had agreed to go away with him for a week-end. He was going to take her to a place he knew about, a hotel on one of the lakes, which would be quiet at that time of year. They were to go walking in the woods, and he talked of making her a chaplet of spring flowers. (The things, thought Janet, that girls will fall for!) And he packed a mandolin in his suitcase, so as to sing to her in the moonlight. Fitzi saw the humor of it now, but at the time it thrilled her. They took the train and got off at the station; there were no taxis there, which seemed odd, and they had to walk with their suitcases a mile along the beach to the hotel—that being, he said, the shortest way. It was very hot, but they got to the hotel at

last. There seemed to be something queer about it, but they went in; and then they were told that it wasn't a hotel any more, but a convalescent home for wounded soldiers. Eugene hadn't been there since the war, and it hadn't occurred to him, said Fitzi, that it might have changed in the meantime. "I suppose," commented Janet unsympathetically, "that he was too busy thinking up poetic speeches to make to you in the moonlight, to have time to inquire about a realistic detail like that!" They went out, forlorn-looking enough, and the convalescent soldiers watching them from the balcony must have guessed that they were disappointed honeymooners, for they began to laugh and hoot at them. There was no taxi back to the station either, so they trudged back, with their suitcases, through the sand, followed by the ribald laughter of the soldiers. "I know what ribald laughter means now," said Fitzi. And when they got to the station there wasn't any train out till night, so Eugene went and hunted up a taxi and they were driven to the nearest town on the main line. The taxi charge was frightful, and Eugene didn't have any more money along than just enough for the trip as planned, so that Fitzi had to chip in to help pay for the railroad tickets, which embarrassed the poor boy. "You can imagine the rest of the journey home," said Fitzi. "I didn't mind so much; I think girls are more robust than men about that sort of thing, when once their minds are made up. I'd just as soon have stopped over with him in the town where we took that train, but Eugene was too crestfallen for me to dare suggest such a thing. I suppose the occasion wouldn't have seemed romantic enough to him. . . ." Janet reflected that it was her turn for confidences, but she had no adventures to relate. "I've nothing to tell," she said. "My life is just college, and a few parties where I drink too much, and—and a sort of demi-vierge relationship with—with a man who doesn't care enough about me to make it worth while for it to be anything else. That's my life." Fitzi commented sympathetically: "It's the life of most of us, I guess; but why," she went on, "are all the interesting men so afraid of love? and the men who do want to marry us—why are they such dull specimens?" They discussed that problem for some time without finding an answer, though it seemed to them that money had something to do with it. At least, the interesting

ones had no money; and perhaps that was what made them so afraid of any really serious relationship with a girl. . . .

II.

Meanwhile, there were other letters from V. B.

Paul was talking of the South Seas again. She wished to God he'd go. Perhaps the South Seas were what he needed. . . . But the next time, it was of starting a very "modern" literary magazine. Who, Janet wondered, would subscribe to such a magazine, and where would Paul get the money to start it with? It seemed merely another way of putting off doing anything.

Late that spring Paul told her that Miss Rankin was going to subsidize the new magazine. The China trip was off, the South Seas forgotten. Janet wrote in her diary: "Miss Rankin wins. Take him, you nasty old woman, and keep him as your baby forever. Good-bye, Paul. We could have been happy if you had wanted me."

In June Jim proposed again—for the last time, he said. And she told him: "For the last time, no."

She wrote to V. B.: "You are right—this is a crazy world."

A visit to Chicago, she thought, might lighten the dull ache of living.

CHAPTER FIVE: A Crazy World

I.

JANET pushed the button, and waited. She had been a guest of her cousin Harriet at Community House for three days. She had been to two lectures; she had met at dinner a number of people interested in social settlement work; she had been shopping—though Cousin Helen was right, the shops in St. Pierre and White Falls were better than those in Chicago. She was supposed to be shopping now. She hadn't called up V. B. to let him know she was coming. Probably he wouldn't be in. Why didn't somebody answer the bell?

She pushed the button again, and a frowsy red-haired woman opened the door. "Is Mr. Blatch in?" Janet asked.

"I don't know—one flight up, in front."

Janet climbed the stairs. The hall had a musty odor.

That must be V. B.'s door. It was too dark to read the name on the card tacked up on it. Janet knocked lightly.

"Come!"

That was his voice, all right.

She opened the door, and entered. V. B. was sitting sprawled out in a big chair. He jumped up and came over to her.

"Why, Janet!" he said.

"Vincent!" she said.

And then self-consciousness overcame them, and they shook hands very formally.

"How long have you been in town?" he asked.

She told him.

He begged her to sit down.

She did so, selecting a big chair opposite his, and waiting for him to speak.

"How is your Cousin Harriet?" he asked.

"Cousin Harriet is very well," Janet answered mechanically,

and looked around the room. It was disappointing; somehow she had expected something rather gorgeous of his room. And it was quite ordinary, except for a large table by the window, with some drawing materials scattered over it. That was where he worked. For the rest, there were big chairs, and a little table, and a couch. A door that led, doubtless, to a hall bedroom. On the other side, another door, of a bathroom, perhaps; and a curtained alcove that might be a kitchenette. Did he get his own meals here? On the walls, ordinary wall-paper; not a single picture. The lights—ugly electric lights, with a shaded desk-lamp on his work-table. No Persian rugs, no hangings, no ivory carved objects on the mantel—nothing but the stub of a cigarette. She remembered Cousin Victoria's place, which she had once seen as a child and which had served as a model in her imagination for the home of a lover of art. When she read love-stories about artists, she always staged the scenes in Cousin Victoria's studio. This wasn't at all like that. It was, Janet thought, rather like her own bare "study" in Scott Park. Except that he really *worked* here.

"Have I interrupted you?" she asked.

"Not at all. Won't you take off your hat?"

She did so, and laid it on the little table.

"Won't you let me make you some tea?" he asked, rising.

She looked at her wrist-watch. "It's rather early for tea," she said. "I thought I'd take *you* out for tea—if you've nothing else to do."

"Nothing better," he said, with a glance toward his work-table.

"I'm afraid I *have* interrupted you," she interpreted.

"No, really. I've done nothing all day."

"Perhaps you were about to begin?"

"I was about to write a letter to my mother," he said.

"Oh!"

"You don't know how difficult it is to write letters to one's mother. It's the hardest thing in the world. And now I've a good excuse for putting it off. So you mustn't go."

She sank back in her chair, smiling.

"Have you been shopping?" he asked.

"Yes."

He sighed. "I believe I asked you about your Cousin Harriet?"

"Yes, you did. Can't you think of anything else to say?" She laughed. "Perhaps we had better have tea, to break the ice! But won't you let me make it?"

She rose and went to the kitchenette. He followed her. "The fact is, as I now realize," he said ruefully, "that I haven't any tea. But I can offer you salty black olives, and bread and butter, and Greek wine. Will that do? Or perhaps you'd rather go out somewhere?"

"It really makes no difference. I'm not actually hungry at the moment. That's a lovely plate."

"The last of some things I brought back from Spain. The rest are all broken."

"Yes, you do need a few more dishes. I saw some this morning, with a quaint foreign pattern something like this one, in a window just off State Street."

"Beyond my means entirely," he said. "I must shop at the ten-cent store at present."

"So you've been to Spain," she said. She was wondering if he would mind if she bought those dishes for him. She remembered that he was sensitive about taking presents—from people he cared for.

"Oh, yes, I lived around Europe for two years."

"Did you like it? I've never been anywhere yet."

"It's cheap. It's all right while your money lasts. But one has to come back to the United States for more money—there's none in Europe."

"Oh!"

"That sounds very materialistic, doesn't it? But I'm not romantic about Europe. I leave that to the bourgeoisie."

"But isn't there more freedom—of a certain sort—in Europe?" she ventured.

"Freedom? There's as much as you can take, anywhere."

"Let's not have tea till later," she said.

"All right." He drifted away.

She went back to her chair. "You're not very enthusiastic about my visit," she said. "I want you to talk to me!"

He sat down opposite her. "What do you want me to talk about?"

"About me."

"Yes. I see. Well—" He seemed to make an effort.
"How are you?"

"My health is excellent, thank you," she said mockingly.

"Well, then—"

"Do you want me to go?" And as he appeared to be about to say yes, she added: "You'll have to write that letter to your mother, if I do!"

"Then I guess I'll have to let you stay," he said.

"Only till six," she told him. "I'm due to join Cousin Harriet for dinner at Community House. At dinner I shall meet people who won't mind talking to me. Serious, earnest people, like Cousin Harriet."

They looked at each other, smiling.

"It is a crazy world, isn't it?" he said.

"Oh, we're well agreed on that," she replied.

"You see I *am* afraid of you," he said.

"Oh! Is that why you're being so—" She hesitated.

"So silly," he quoted. "Yes, that's why."

She rose and went over and stood beside his chair. "You needn't be afraid of me," she said. One hand touched his shoulder lightly. He took the other, that hung at her side, and pressed it between his own.

"You're not afraid of me now?" she asked, after a moment.

"No. Not so much."

She gave his hand a returning pressure, and withdrew hers.
"Please talk to me," she said.

"All right."

She went back to her chair.

"But wouldn't you rather talk to me?" he suggested.

"There's nothing new. I'm unhappy—I told you that. And I want to get over being. That's what I want you to talk to me about."

"Is it hopeless?"

"Oh, quite."

"Well—there's a formula. But you already know it."

"Do I? What is it?"

"*This is a crazy world.* You just say that to yourself every once in a while—and you feel better. Try it."

"*This is a crazy world,*" she repeated.

"Don't you feel better already?" he asked, smiling.

"There's something to it," she said. "I suppose what ails me is expecting to find some sense in what happens to me. But in a crazy world—it doesn't matter."

"You understand perfectly. That is the philosophy of the twentieth century—and the moral lesson, such as it is, implicit in all twentieth-century art. Perhaps you've noticed it in my stage designs."

"And perhaps," said Janet, "that was why they didn't appeal to Mr. R. H. Royce!"

"I fear so. He still lives in a nineteenth-century universe. But you and I—"

"Yes?"

"We are at home in chaos."

"*You* may be."

"*You will* be."

"Let's hope so!"

"The nineteenth century, Janet dear, was a time when everybody believed in law and order. That's why it seems such a queer time to us now—and why we can't read its books or admire its great men, they seem so foolish. They saw law and order everywhere—in the movements of the stars and in the colors on a butterfly's wing. They had discovered the laws of progress—we were slowly but steadily approaching the Parliament of Man and the Federation of the World. There were to be no more wars. Machinery was to do away with human labor. Every one was to be happy and virtuous. There was a solution to every problem. The nineteenth-century mind—"

Janet's attention wandered. It was all true, no doubt, but it was mere verbal quibbling with the real issue. Of course he knew that as well as she did. He was only talking for time. And she was grateful, because it gave her a chance to think. To be sure, in a certain sense, there wasn't any use thinking about it. Thinking didn't do any good. But at least she wanted to realize exactly what she was doing. Not why—there wasn't any *why* to anything. Things just happened. This was a crazy world. There wasn't any sense or meaning in what she was going to do. She wasn't in love with Vincent Blatch. He wasn't in love with her. But what of that? She

had known, as soon as she came in the door to-day, what was going to happen. Well, let it happen. This was a crazy world. . . .

"You aren't listening," he said suddenly.

"No," she smiled.

He looked at her, and then rose and came over beside her. She rose, too. He put his arms about her. Their lips kissed.

Presently she struggled to speak.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I'm not in love with you," she said stubbornly.

She hoped he'd know what she meant. *Love* was too solemn a word for this; she couldn't help it if she felt that love was "till death"—that sort of thing. And this bitter sweetness that all her body and spirit yearned for now was of the moment. Some might call it love—this ache, this need to have his arms about her and the comfort of his kisses on her lips; this desire for the forgetfulness that surrender would bring. Wasn't that what people called love? Yes; but not she. She knew the difference. This wasn't love. . . .

"What of it?" he asked, holding her fast within his arms.

Then he *did* understand! "I just wanted you to know," she murmured, and gave him her lips passionately.

2.

A girl's first experience in education, in social life, in work, may be told by a story-teller simply and frankly; but it is difficult to tell simply and frankly of a girl's first experience in sexual love. Yet that experience is one of tremendous significance to her. It is doubtless a pity that it should not invariably occur under the most fortunate and romantic auspices; it ought, as her own heart would agree, to be the joyous fulfillment of first love; and it ought to be the beginning of a life-long happiness in marriage. Yet we cannot fail to observe that often enough it happens otherwise; nor can we turn our back upon the facts as utterly unworthy of our sympathy. Janet did not create the world in which she found herself. It was doubtless in some sense her own fault that she had not married Jim and saved herself all this trouble;

it was, from the traditional point of view, unreasonable of her to refuse his honorable and awkward offers: in other times and places she would have been given no choice in the matter, but would have been married off to him willy-nilly, and borne his children, and worn the expensive clothes which he would have been proud to provide; in due time she would have accepted her miseries as a matter of course, and have coerced her own daughters into equally suitable marriages, regardless of their young wishes. But the modern America in which she lived gave her, perhaps rashly, the freedom to decide that matter for herself. And she was one of a continually increasing number of girls who do, in modern America, refuse the security and dignity of a marriage with a man, however suitable, with whom they are not in love. In another day they would have chosen otherwise; and even to-day there are girls who marry suitable men without being in love with them—and provide material for observant story-tellers a few years later. Janet didn't; she never for a moment thought of it—and one may admire her for that, at least. But, it might be asked, why *couldn't* she have fallen in love with Jim? Perhaps because her father, who from her infancy had been inevitably her model of manhood, was a finer type, with his sensitiveness to beauty, his interest in ideas, his incapacity for subduing himself unquestioningly to the mere processes of money-making; and her father was, in the world's view, a sort of "failure." It was one of life's "failures," then—some one who could think of something besides money-making, that she had to love. And in this respect, too, it may be noted that she was one of an increasing number of American girls, who in seeking a husband sought for something besides the ability to make money. Doubtless she, and all of them, would have preferred a man who had a sense of responsibility and some capacity for making his way in the world, as well as a sense of beauty and a capacity for dealing with ideas. Without both, the man would not make a very satisfactory husband. But modern America is not rich in such men; the sense of beauty and the interest in ideas is quickly battered out of young men by the ruthless and cynical and over-timid business world—while the boy who dares to think of himself as an artist is all too easily persuaded to hate and fear economic responsibility.

He is made to choose between responsibility and his art; and he accepts irresponsibility as the price of becoming an artist. Yet it is in such a world that these girls must seek their mates. We have seen Janet's response to such a situation. When she first met Vincent Blatch, she fell in love with him because he was a lover of beauty, the first she had known besides her father; but she intuitively recognized him as irresponsible, and she tried to get over her passion for him. To all practical purposes, she succeeded; Janet was never born to be the victim of an unreasoning passion. Because it was incompatible with her self-respect, she crushed it: and one may admire her for that, too. Here are strength of character and good common sense, befitting the granddaughter of Andrew March. And, finding a boy who was a lover of beauty, she sought to transfer to him that newly-awakened mating-passion. She would have been happy to marry Paul. But Paul was afraid of marriage, because it involved responsibility. Yet what are a girl's charms for, if not to awaken and stimulate a boy's masculine enterprise and courage? Here, too, is no uncommon situation in which such girls as Janet find themselves. Some of them pretend to accept the mating upon Paul's irresponsible terms, and wear themselves out in trying to make a husband out of an artist lover; they may succeed, or they may fail. But Janet had scarcely even that opportunity—it was snatched away from her by an older woman who was willing to support the boy. And now we have a humiliated Janet, defeated, hurt—with a broken heart, for all that she does not cry about it. Shall those who hold their heads high, and hide their griefs from the world, have none of our pity? But what can she do about it? Times have changed, and she does not even think of entering a nunnery. Work might have been, for one of different temperament, a solace; but she had tried work and had been disillusioned. She had, indeed, none of those rather unusual capacities which would have enabled her to forge ahead and make a place for herself in a working world that has still, except in its humblest and most ill-paid services, too little use for women. Her opportunities were chiefly of dissipation; she tried them, and they wearied and disgusted her. Drunkenness and flirtation could not solace her. What other cure is there available for a broken heart?

In the case of a boy, it could well have been understood that he might seek to heal these emotional hurts in the arms of another girl; men, in life and in fiction, have always had that privilege. But the world is changing; in life, at least, girls are beginning to take that same privilege. They find that not only a man's self-respect is restored by such consolations, but, if we may believe them, a girl's also: at least the same impulses exist, the same needs, the same opportunities, and, more and more in contemporary life, the same actions. These actions may seem in women more lacking in dignity than in a man, because they are a defiance of the ideal which would have women "different." But shall honest fiction fail to report them? These consolations, unromantic though they may be, are not found any more incompatible with feminine than with masculine self-respect: the bitter-sweet medicine of "light love" is sought by them, too, for the healing of their wounded hearts. It may be a poor medicine; but shall we, who grant so readily to the tormented heroes of fiction our sympathy and understanding in such a situation, deny it to a girl? In our very reluctance there is an implicit admission that the world is niggardly in what it offers to a girl, whom nothing less than the best should suffice. Change it, then, so that such girls as Janet can have real happiness in love; but meantime Janet herself has faced the world she lives in, and is willing to take the poor best that it offers. She has not planned deliberately to do so; the choice has been made in her unconscious mind—and she might, if she had a little less self-knowledge, gain the approval of romantic readers by thinking of this as the great love of her life. But she is a little more clear-headed than that; she does not want to fool herself to that extent. She had been deeply in love with Vincent Blatch once, because he was the finest man she had ever seen; but there had been no chance of enduring happiness with him, and her self-respect had commanded her to get over it. Now, hurt and humbled, she is willing to take what life has to offer: what of his love she can have, giving him such of hers as he can take; yet she will not call it love, for that is something of which her proud young heart has not yet relinquished the secret hope. He mocks at her, tenderly, as a Puritan. And she says stubbornly, "I can't help it if I am a Puritan. You'll have to take

me as I am. If you don't like me that way, I'll go." "No—stay," he says. . . . Nor is this so selfish or thoughtless of him as might be supposed. He has guessed from her letters somewhat of her hurts. He has his own philosophy of love, as of life, born of much experience. It would be easy enough to send away this trembling girl with good advice, and congratulate himself smugly upon a virtuous action. He could say to her: "My dear, you need a real lover—one to whom you mean everything in the world. You are entitled to that. Don't do this. Wait for the real thing." It is true enough; this isn't the real thing, and he knows it. She has a right to a boy's adoration, to his devotion, to his hopes and plans for a life together. But—that is just what she has tried and failed to get for herself; it isn't what she wants now: only what *he* has to give—understanding, and sympathy, and tenderness, and, without which these would not ring true to her, the final and essential tribute to her scorned womanhood. She has to know that she is desirable to a lover. She has to feel that one man for whom she cares isn't afraid of her. She has come to him unconsciously for that reassurance. . . . But who can be so clear-sighted at such a moment as this? Already he is forgetting how undeserving he is of her love. The years and the hurts fall away from him. "I love you, Janet. It's true. And I want your love. Kiss me, and tell me that you love me, Janet." And so the ice breaks in her heart. "Oh, Vincent, I do love you," she whispers, and there are tears in her eyes. . . . Afterward she will come to her senses again. To-night, reflecting wakefully upon it all in her room at Community House, she will remember that it wasn't love—for either of them. And she will be glad that she has grown wise and sensible. If it had been Paul, she would never have let him go, she would have clung to him and tormented him and interfered with his career and made them both terribly unhappy. But she would let Vincent go, no matter how much it hurt her. She'd not infringe upon his freedom. She'd not be like that girl Paul had told her about. She'd not spoil their adventure. . . . So she would think afterward. But now, for an hour, she forgets her wisdom, and this is love to her, and she is happy.

The next day Janet bought some of those quaint foreign-looking dishes and had them sent to V. B.'s. In the afternoon she came herself. He was in his purple dressing-gown, and his fingers were stained with colored inks. He had evidently been working. She glanced at his work-table and saw a miniature stage-set in some state of incompleteness.

"I *have* interrupted, this time," she said.

"I don't mind," he replied. "I like interruptions."

They kissed, and she flung off her hat. She didn't care if she had interrupted. She had no responsibility with regard to his work. She wasn't his conscience.

"I took a walk along the lake-front this afternoon," she said. "It was lovely. I've never seen the sky so blue. In fact, I seldom notice skies. That's one quarrel I've always had with stories in books. They always spend so much time telling just what color the sky was. And I've never cared. I've never been interested in such things. But to-day I saw colors and shapes that I'd never paid any attention to before. There was a sailboat. I've gone sailing thousands of times. But to-day I saw the sail like a flower on the water. I never saw it like that before."

"That's what comes of associating with useless people," he said lightly. "The sail ceases to be an instrument of action, as you have always considered it—and becomes a thing to be enjoyed for its purely useless qualities of shape and color."

"I felt," she went on, "as though I had been going about in a mist. And I have, lately. Not seeing anything. I've been thinking too much. I've been locked up in myself. Now I've stopped caring—about important things. It's strange. I feel as though I had been set free. Do you know what I mean?"

"Of course I do. I felt like that at eighteen when I got drunk for the first time in my carefully reared young life. I discovered the realm beyond good and evil—and I've stayed there ever since. Be always drunk—with wine, with ideas, or with shapes and colors—"

"That's from some book. I've heard it said before. But I'm *not* drunk. This is real."

"No, it isn't. This is only a dream," he said. "Breakfast-food factories are real—or is it soap-factories?"

She made a face at him. She had told him about the soap-man yesterday. "Soap-factories are real enough," she said. "But so is this. That's the queer thing." And she rehearsed her formula, laughing: "This is a crazy world!—By the way, have my dishes come?"

"Something came, a little while ago," he said. "Was it dishes? I didn't look." His glance wandered about the room and lighted on a package in a corner. He took out his knife and knelt beside it. From a mass of packing he drew up a flowery plate. "A Czecho-Slovak pattern," he said. "How nice of you!" He dug eagerly into the excelsior, and took out more plates, cups, saucers, and a salad-bowl.

"I thought you'd like them," said Janet.

"And now we ought to eat out of them," said Vincent. "Only, unfortunately, all I have is what's left from yesterday. I haven't been out to get anything. Do you think you could make another tea of salty olives and Greek wine?"

"I'd love salty olives," she said. "But how about you? I've had two square meals to-day. What have you had?"

"Coffee," he said.

"Is that all?"

"And some bread and butter—I *think*. Yes, the heel of the loaf is gone. I must have had it for my lunch."

"Then olives and wine aren't enough. You must come out with me for dinner, anyway."

He looked down wistfully at his dressing-gown and slippers. "I'd have to dress," he said plaintively. "And I'm so comfortable. Don't make me go out! Please let's stay here. After all, olives and Greek wine nourished the Age of Pericles."

She laughed. "All right. This once. But you must shave while I'm setting the table."

He rubbed his face inquiringly. "I suppose I must," he said. "That's the worst of being a man—so much time wasted in scraping hairs from the face."

"Why not grow a beard?"

"In Paris, yes. But not here. I'd look as old as I am."

"How old are you?"

"Terribly old. . . . What would you guess?"

"It's hard to say. You're a mere infant in so many ways. Forty, perhaps."

"Not quite—but almost. Thirty-nine, to be exact. Doesn't that seem terribly old to you?"

"Pooh! I'm twenty-one!"

"That sounds terribly young to me. Only twenty-one?"

"Do I seem older?"

"Not in looks. But you are so sure of yourself. You might be any age."

"Girls grow up faster than boys, I think," said Janet.

"You look at first glance like a school-girl," he said. "But you aren't."

"No," she said thoughtfully. "I don't know just exactly what I am."

He smiled. "Why be—puritanically precise, anyway?"

"I could be mathematically precise. This can't last very much longer, you know."

"Arithmetic depresses me. Let's forget everything like that."

"No—you mayn't kiss me again before you shave, Vincent. And I must set the table."

When he dutifully went into the bathroom, she strayed over to his work-table and looked at the unfinished stage-set. A beautiful little toy, like a doll's house. What was it for? He hadn't told her. She hadn't asked what he was doing. That was his affair. Perhaps he ought to be working on it now. But that was his affair, too. Anyway, she wouldn't keep him from his work much longer. . . .

4.

"Must you really go so soon, Janet?"

"I'm afraid I must. I can't come home to Community House much later than midnight."

"You haven't an imaginary girl-friend you could pretend to be staying with?"

"Not to-night. . . . Do girls—always have imaginary girl-friends for an excuse?"

"Pretty often, I guess. Why?"

"Nothing. . . . But, Vincent—I was serious when I said I

could tell to an hour how long it would be before—before we say good-by. And it's very soon."

"You're not leaving Chicago right away?"

"No—I may stay in Chicago a month or two. But my time is to be pretty well taken up from now on. Cousin Harriet has laid out a program for me. Very educational. It's like my sociology class at the State U., only more so. First we visit the women's night court and see the fallen women brought in and tried. Doesn't that amuse you, Vincent? Then we visit an institution for the care of wayward girls. It should be most instructive. You were quite right—this is a crazy world."

Vincent laughed with her.

"And then—oh, there's lots of things to learn about in the next ten days. Including jails. I've seen jails back at home—the modern kind, which are the worst of all, so I'm told. Well, you see I shall be busy enough!"

"Too busy for a stolen visit now and then?"

"I'd rather not. No, we'll say good-by."

"But when? You alarm me. Surely *this* isn't our last meeting!"

"No. The educational program was to have started in tomorrow; but I've arranged for one more day to myself. Tomorrow's ours. And—I'll stay overnight with an imaginary girl-friend. I thought it was an original idea of my own!"

5.

Janet came next day with a huge parcel from a delicatessen store. Vincent, she thought, had probably forgotten to have anything in. And she was right—he had forgotten. He had been at work all morning on his stage-set.

She stood (while again, obediently, he shaved) looking at his set. She wanted to ask what it was for. But no—it was a dream of his that he didn't want to share with her. She wouldn't ask.

She hoped that his plans, whatever they were, would be successful this time. She hadn't heard his name mentioned by any one since she came; Chicago was a big place, and a plan to revolutionize the theater would cause less stir here

than in St. Pierre; and she hadn't wanted to ask anybody about him.

He was probably in bad straits, financially. . . . And it occurred to her, perhaps that was why he hadn't wanted to go out to dinner! He couldn't afford to take her—and he didn't want her to have to pay. That was foolish of him. But men *were* foolish.

And if he was—perhaps—almost starving, how gallantly nevertheless he was working away at his task of creating beauty! Perhaps that was why he hadn't told her what he was working on—because it was some impractical forlorn hope!

She had some money saved up. She hadn't spent much on her Chicago trip, thus far; and she could always get more. She wished she could leave some money with him—leave it somewhere in his room, where he would find it afterward. Her glance paused thoughtfully on the mantel over the grate.

And then she blushed—remembering something in a story of Maupassant's about money left by a man on a girl's mantel-piece. In payment. No—that *was* a poor idea.

Well, she would be as nice to him as she could in the hours that remained. Twenty hours. She glanced at her wrist-watch. No, only nineteen and a half. They would breakfast here together, and then say good-by forever.

She couldn't help him with his work. He didn't want her help. The best thing she could do was to leave him alone. He need not ever think of her again.

That was all she could do for him—be nice to him now.

She realized the excessively altruistic character of these intentions, and smiled at herself. "I mustn't commence to mother him," she said.

6.

Breakfast should be, in spite of everything, a gay occasion. . . .

But before breakfast he spoiled it all.

"Janet," he said, "would you like for us to—get married?"

Janet was surprised and shocked. "Why, Vincent!" she said. "Of course not! How ridiculous!"

"To be sure," he said sullenly, "I haven't ten dollars to my name."

And then Janet made it worse by commencing to cry. She hadn't cried but once since she was a little girl, and that was in shame and anger. This was in shame and pity. She couldn't bear to have Vincent think that she despised him for being poor. "That isn't—what I meant!" she said. "Oh, Vincent—I don't care whether you've got ten cents!"

"Then why?"

"Because."

"Yes?"

She considered. "You don't *need* me, Vincent."

"But I *want* you, Janet."

"It isn't the same thing." She sat up, flushed with a discovery—a thought. "After all, Vincent—look at me!"

"I'm looking," he said. "You *are* rather splendid!"

"I don't know about that," she said. "But I'm—*something*. And there must be some *real* use for me—I *mustn't* just go to waste. And it isn't *enough* just being wanted! Don't you *see*?"

"Oh—I see," he said. "It's true enough. . . . I resign."

And, though she was glad he did see, she cried again.

So their farewell breakfast didn't turn out to be so cheerful after all.

But it had at least a superficial gayety. There were things they couldn't talk about; but they managed to avoid them without too much apparent constraint. It was as if they were strangers, who liked each other but dared not become familiar.

Janet looked at her wrist-watch. Time was up. She rose from the breakfast table.

"Good-by, Vincent."

"I don't like good-bys." He had turned and gone over to his work-table and was standing there looking down at his stage-set.

Well—if he was going to be sullen!

She came up behind him, kissed him behind the ear, and went out quickly.

7.

That was late in June. She did not go to see Vincent Blatch again. That was over. Life was very strange, she

thought, as she went about according to Cousin Harriet's directions, on an instructive sociological exploration of Chicago. It was strange that an experience like that could leave her so unchanged. She was still the same Janet. Except that now she wasn't sick with the hurts of defeated love any more. Her memories of Paul seemed remote, like memories from another life. Vincent had given her back her pride. She would always be grateful to him for that. But for the rest—it seemed strange. It had meant so much, in itself, at the time; and now it appeared that it didn't really mean anything, because her life went on just as if it hadn't happened. The tremendousness of that experience seemed irrelevant and bewildering. It didn't fit into the rest of her life.

She couldn't help wondering if she had come through that adventure safe from its story-book consequences. In a novel, of course, she would find herself pregnant, and thus be properly punished for her sin. Yes, in a story that was sure to happen; thank goodness it wasn't so inevitable in real life! It was, indeed, nothing she need worry about; she had known what to do. . . . But suppose it happened—what then? Well, she had faced that possibility beforehand. She had accepted that not impossible consequence. Emotionally, it didn't seem possible that her past could thus intrude itself into her future. That would be so meaningless. . . . She brooded more and more about it as the days slipped by. "I must not worry," she said. "I will soon know."

The time came when her fears should have been lifted, and were not. Yet she still could not believe that so unimaginable a thing was real. To-morrow would bring better news; but to-morrow left her still uncertain. It seemed to her that the condition of her mind, her worrying, might in some way have affected these bodily functions; or that the experience she had gone through had changed their rhythms. A week passed; and then she reluctantly decided to accept this incredible event as true.

As soon as she believed it, her fears were gone, and she thought, "Well, why not?" She was oddly happy about it. Her first thought was of Vincent. She would go and tell him. He would want to marry her. And then she thought of Pen and Brad. They'd be surprised at her marrying Vincent

Blatch. But they'd be nice about it; and Brad would find something for Vincent to do. . . . Then she frowned. He wouldn't like that. She remembered. He wouldn't like marrying at all. It would be rather like a trick—a mean trick to play on him. She had heard of girls who had done that. No, it wouldn't be fair. He hadn't taken such consequences as these into account. He hadn't undertaken to assume any such responsibilities. She couldn't force them upon him. She mustn't spoil his life. It wouldn't do at all. It was out of the question. He must never know anything about it. She would go through with it alone. It needn't be his baby. . . .

She had heard, in sociological discussions at home, of fatherless children, of unwedded mothers. She wondered now what they would think of her in that situation. What would Pen say? And Brad? It would hurt them—terribly. But they'd see her through it. She smiled, thinking of Bud: he'd probably feel that he ought to get a gun and shoot somebody—he was romantic about his sister. . . . Oh, they'd be good to her. Nevertheless she felt very lonely. The thought of Paul came into her mind. If it were his child—of course she'd go to him, of course she would marry him. It would be the best thing in the world for him. He thought he needed experience: well, this would be experience, and a lot better than bumming around the South Seas. And forlornly she wished that it were true—that this baby were Paul's. Then it would all have some meaning. . . . And with a sudden inward revolt, she felt that she could not bring Vincent Blatch's child into the world. *That* would be too meaningless. . . .

These ideas swirled through her mind; and having gone, they came again, confusingly, conflicting with each other, working themselves out in painful or in comforting fantasies. Impulses warred within her, killed each other, and lived again, endlessly. . . . And always the same terrible conclusion.

She had thought of herself as facing this possibility beforehand. But she hadn't really faced it. It was hard to face! In a mad world, it was one more madness. She set her mind sternly to the thought of what she had to do. She said the word in a whisper with her lips, as she sat in her room late at night confronting her destinies. The word was easier to say than the thought was to think. It was a simple,

scientific word. It had no horror in it. It was unlike the thought.

And then she realized how ignorant she was. What could she do? Where could she go? She had an impulse to confide in Cousin Harriet. But no, that wouldn't be fair to Harriet. She must go through with this alone. But how? She knew, vaguely, of medicines that were used by girls "in trouble." Perhaps she could remember, if she tried, the things that she had heard. But her mind rejected this resource. Those medicines, she knew vaguely, were sometimes dangerous in ignorant hands. She must not do anything foolish. . . . And then, as if she had not decided the matter, her thoughts were whirled away into these fantasies again. She saw Vincent's look of embarrassed surprise . . . her father's troubled face . . . her mother, trying not to show her hurt incomprehension—and, in sheer preposterous imagination, Paul falling on his knees and clasping her to him and crying out, "Oh, Janet, I'm so glad!"

Before she slept, she remembered those midwives down in the stockyards district; they could tell her what she wanted to know, surely. And with that thought she slept, and had many troubled dreams. One of these dreams was in the nature of an argument. Some one was saying to her: "And you've had such a good bringing up! How could you do such things? If this is what comes of modern freedom, *my* daughters are going to be more strictly brought up, I can tell you!" And she struggled to reply, but couldn't quite find the words to justify herself with. The reproaches went on, in a neighborly tone, endlessly; and still she was baffled for words; but at last she did cry out in her dream: "These things happen, I tell you! They happen to all sorts of girls. Some girls are crushed by them. But I shan't be crushed! Wait and see!"

The next afternoon she managed to free herself at last from the day's program, and went to the place which had been instructively pointed out to her. After making some unflinching inquiries, she climbed some stairs, and a fat woman in a dirty apron listened to her suspiciously, and said: "I don't do such t'ings, but I give you de address of a doctor." Janet hadn't wanted anything but information from her, and shuddered involuntarily at the thought of being the recipient of any other

services. The visit depressed her, and her search for the doctor's office was not encouraging, for it led her through mean and dirty streets. It was with a sinking heart that she waited for him at last in his cluttered office. He stepped out suddenly from an inner room; he wore an apron, like a butcher's; the eyes in his round red face were little, piggish eyes; and his fingernails were grimy. "Who sent you?" he asked sharply. She answered mechanically, struggling to overcome her aversion. "Have you got a hundred dollars?" he demanded. She nodded, unable to speak. "Bring it with you to-morrow at three o'clock," he said. "Three o'clock to-morrow," he repeated, bringing his red face emphatically near to hers, "and bring it with you—do you understand? a hundred dollars!" . . . She was out of there at last, in the sunshine again. . . .

She was finding out, now, about life. "A crazy world"—she had said that lightly: now she knew how true it was. She had broken through the flimsy painted cardboard walls of her comfortable and sheltered existence, and glimpsed the dark gulfs outside. For a moment she had faced the prospect of death—a hideously useless death, death before she had time to find out what life was for: an ending, sordid and brutal, of all her young curiosity and hope and endeavor. It might so easily happen to a girl, in her ignorance and helplessness. . . .

But Janet wasn't quite helpless. There was Cousin Harriet. Janet realized now that all through this frightful week it was the sustaining thought of Cousin Harriet at the back of her mind that had steadied her. She knew well enough now how girls felt who had no Cousin Harriet to go to for help. No wonder they did mad and foolish things sometimes!

She didn't quite know why she trusted Harriet so deeply. Perhaps because she had to—there was no one else. Her mother would have understood her having a baby without being married—but not this. She was out of touch with some of life's realities. But Cousin Harriet—Janet remembered the way she had talked after that visit . . . a visit which now seemed more ironic than ever . . . to an institution devoted to the care and reformation of "wayward girls." Cousin

Harriet hadn't been moralistic, nor sentimental: just sensible. She would understand.

But she might refuse to help—in that way. She might insist upon Janet's having her baby. Anything else might be against her principles. . . . And, facing that argument, Janet commenced to examine her reasons for not wanting to bear this child. She searched her mind for any lurking cowardice, any fear of what the world might think. No, it wasn't that—she wasn't afraid. She was sure of that. Her real reasons were otherwise: and they seemed to her good reasons. She braced herself for that talk with Cousin Harriet.

8.

Once more, it is difficult for the story-teller to deal with such an incident. It is not in the tradition of fiction—it is merely one of the sorts of things that happen all about us in life; according to some estimates, about a million times a year in America, or once every thirty seconds. Perhaps it is true that it is too sordid a thing for fiction to deal with; perhaps fiction should report only beautiful and pleasing things. But if experiences such as these are becoming more and more in modern America a part of the experience of women in their love-lives, then it is to be feared that story-tellers will insist upon dealing with them, even at the cost of alienating readers of good taste. Yet it must be conceded that there are emotional reasons why the traditions of fiction have been hostile to such incidents. Having an illegitimate child seems brave, wholesome, splendid, in comparison to an abortion. Yet it might be admitted, if it were dealt with properly. That is to say, if so unhallowed an act were followed inevitably by the death of the misguided unfortunate who attempted it; that does frequently happen in real life, and perhaps fiction should be restricted only to such instructive instances. Or it could be permitted to occur without such edifying consequences, if it were understood to be an example of the depravity and viciousness of the female character at its worst. So long as the incident served some such indubitably moral purpose, it might have some excuse. But a story of a girl who proposes such a crime against the laws of man (and, as they say confi-

dently, of God also), and yet is shown as not utterly lost to shame—a girl who seems in most other respects a nice girl—what can be said in defense of such a story? Nothing, doubtless, except that since God and man do not seem to have consulted women in the making of these laws, it might perhaps be as well to hear one of these rash criminals in her own defense. Or would that have an immoral effect upon the young? For fiction, it is asserted, must at all costs, even at the cost of truth, inculcate right living. It is from books, we are assured, that people get all their wrong ideas. What remains inexplicable is how it happens that this crime, if committed once every thirty seconds in America, has managed to become so widespread without any suggestion from books of fiction. The censorship has kept our fiction “clean” in that respect, yet people have gone their ways indifferent to its high example. Perhaps it is life, after all, and not literature, that makes people do such things. And perhaps fiction, which is permitted to help its readers to understand and sympathize with the murderer and the thief and the drunkard, which is even permitted at times to glorify the rebel and the leader of forlorn hopes, may be permitted for once to undertake the task of creating sympathy and understanding for the girl who in defiance of law determines not to bring to life the fruit of her womb. If her motives are shameful and abominable, that will doubtless be apparent in the telling of the story. . . . So let us go on with it.

9.

Harriet Royce is sitting in the big chair in her room at Community House. Harriet has none of the beauty of her sisters, Helen and Patricia. She is a little, brown, bird-like person, with sharp blue eyes and quick speech. She has inherited her father's administrative ability, and she wears an unconscious air of authority. People let her manage their lives for them. She has a hard efficiency; and people trust her.

She looks thoughtfully at tall black-haired Janet, over on the divan. She likes Janet. She had concluded very quickly that Janet had no profound interest in settlement work; her destiny obviously—some people might not have thought so, but Harriet

knew—was to be a wife and mother. She'd be a rather splendid mate for the right man. But it wouldn't hurt her to find out a few things about the way the world was run. She had thought at first that Janet had some special interest in coming to Chicago—a man, naturally. But after a few days Janet had seemed to have no program except that mapped out for her; the man, Harriet would think, hadn't been very interesting after all. . . . But the last few days Janet had been plainly distraught. The troubles of young love, it would seem; but Janet had the air of being able to attend to her own affairs, and Harriet hadn't invited her confidences. To-night, however, there was a flush in the girl's cheeks, a brightness in her eyes, that denoted some emotional state. Harriet was rather prepared to be asked for advice. . . . Harriet had chanced to be talking about wayward girls; she wasn't sure how the subject had come up, but she noted that Janet evinced an unusual interest in it, and wouldn't let her go on to the next day's program. She had merely been expressing her customary views on this subject; marrying off a girl to the father of the child didn't always, she had remarked, solve the problem by any means. She continues: "If they are in love with each other, that's another matter; then they are glad to get married. But as a matter of fact, they generally are not in love at all; and very often the girl doesn't want to marry the man. In that case it is foolish to urge them to get married." . . . Then Janet speaks, with some difficulty. "I'm glad—that you take such an unsentimental view of the subject. Because I know—a girl who's in trouble—and doesn't want to marry the man. And—will you help her?" Still Harriet suspects nothing. "Tell me about her. Who is she?" But while she asks, she realizes the truth. Brad's little girl! She is prepared for Janet's answer. "It's me. And you've got to help me." And the story pours out incoherently. After some practical questions, Harriet looks at her thoughtfully. "If marriage is out of the question," she says, "what's the matter with your going ahead and having the baby? It's safer, you know. And your father and mother will make it easy for you." Janet nods. "Yes, Pen and Brad would stand by me. It would hurt them, but they'd be good sports about it. But—I don't want this baby, Harriet." Her upward gaze is full of a woman's logic

that she can't put into words. "But—why don't you want the baby, Janet? You'll love it when it comes, you know." "I know I would," Janet tells her. "It isn't that. But—would my loving it make up for its not . . . having a father? You see—I do want a baby, some time. But I want my baby to have a real father." "There's adoption, of course," says Harriet. "That could be arranged very simply. Then your baby would have everything." Janet shakes her head. "No," she says. "It would be terrible to think of having a baby, and never seeing it." . . . "That's just the trouble," Harriet agrees; "you would want to see it. You'd want to get it back. Girls are that way. It can't be done so easily. It seems to leave a scar on the conscience. But—this other will too, Janet." But Janet shakes her head. "Not on my conscience. I've made very sure of that. I know." "On your emotions, then," Harriet urges. "I've seen enough to know something about it. It's rather a terrible experience to have to look back on, Janet. I'm not speaking of the physical dangers—in good hands, they shouldn't be greater than in bearing a child. But—all for nothing! It's physically wrong—and psychically." "I know. It's a choice of evils, isn't it? I won't even consider adoption. But I've thought a lot about having the baby and bringing it up myself. I'm not afraid. People could think what they liked. I could stand it. But the baby, as he grew up—it wouldn't have been a nice thing to do to him, to give him that kind of life, in the world as it is. It's all right for me to be heroic: but how about the child? Do you honestly advise it?" "Yes—I do, Janet. It won't be so bad as you think. Times are changing—and you can help them change." "Oh, our friends would be kind to me. And I'd bring him up not to be ashamed. But—I can do better than that, Harriet. I can have a baby whose father wants him—some time. If I'm given another chance. It depends on you. You can refuse to help me. If you do, I'm helpless. I'll have the baby, because I must. But it will be a life that you've chosen for me. Are you sure you've the right to do that, Harriet?" "Janet—no one else has the right to decide for you. I've told you what I think. I want you to do it of your own free will. But you're free to do what you think best. Only—it may be the worst, Janet. You may not be so wise as you think." "I

realize that, Harriet. But—if I can learn something from this experience, I'm willing to pay the price for it. I don't expect to come off scot-free." "Take one more day to think about it, Janet. And then tell me what you've decided." . . . And Janet goes to her own room, gratefully. Harriet hadn't urged her to marry Vincent. She was glad of that. It wouldn't be fair to Vincent. . . . But why should she now unreasonably break into tears?

10.

Dr. Zerneke smiled down at her patient. "I've no more time to waste on you to-day." She pinched Janet's arm thoughtfully with her brown fingers, nodded approval, and went out. . . . Dr. Zerneke was like Harriet, only older, browner, more curiously alive inside that dry husk, more authoritative, harder, even more unsentimental. Janet had been under her care in the sanitarium for a week. Next Sunday she was going home. . . . The worst thing about this experience was something that really lay quite outside of it—the memory of that man who called himself a doctor, whose hands had been dirty, whose eyes had been pig's eyes, and who had asked, "Have you got a hundred dollars?" That face still came at night to trouble her dreams, to make her wake in shuddering horror. There was blood, as well as dirt, on his hands. In her dreams he was a butcher, and she his victim. And her dreaming mind must have believed what her waking mind did not, for in her dreams what he said to her was: "The wages of sin—" "But I don't want to die!" she would say aloud, struggling out of sleep, sitting up in bed and staring into the darkness of her room. And then, wholly awake: "But it wasn't sin!" Dr. Zerneke, who came in to see her once a day, told her she was perfectly all right, and smoked a cigarette with her, was not a woman to confide these dreams to: she was a realist, with a strong-minded way of looking at life that was in itself curative. "You're a magnificent specimen of a woman," she would say, pinching Janet's muscles for the pleasure of finding them so hard. "You'll have fine babies. Only—no more of this nonsense!" . . . Neither she nor Cousin Harriet had ever asked who the man was. In fact,

they never spoke as though there were any man implicated in this matter. This seemed to be, in their minds, an exclusively feminine concern. . . . And so, by daylight, it seemed to Janet. It wasn't Vincent's affair. He needn't know. He had no right to know. "This experience belongs to *me*," she said to herself sturdily. But at night, in the darkness, she was lonely and bewildered. She tried to understand what it all meant, and was baffled.—*Why?*—That question included so many things: sometimes it meant, why, if she wasn't ashamed, she hadn't chosen to bear Vincent's child—and again, why, if this was what might happen, she had gone into her adventure so self-confidently—but mostly it was why, if such things occurred all the time, they should be kept so secret—she knew now what she hadn't guessed at the time, the meaning of an obscure and unexplained illness of Pat's this last winter; even Pat hadn't told her!—and why there weren't things like this in novels? Oh, yes, there were dreadful things enough in novels, but they happened only to poor girls—or terribly ignorant or utterly reckless girls. . . . She hadn't been so terribly ignorant nor even so utterly reckless. She had been falsely confident, no doubt; but even so, this had been foreseen as a remote possibility, and accepted. Only—things were never what you expected them to be. She had imagined something heroically dangerous and vaguely painful; she hadn't imagined lying awake at night, thinking. The mere physical pain she had suffered had been nothing to this pain of asking questions of herself hour after hour in the dark and getting no answers.—*Why?*—She thought of the wayward girls whose reformation she had discussed with Cousin Harriet. She pondered their likeness to herself—and their difference. She thought of one in particular, a little dark-eyed, sullen thing. "She's ashamed of what she's done," Janet said to herself. "I'm not!" And so, comforted by her pride, she would fall asleep, only to sink into some level of dreaming thought below her conscious arrogance, a region of childish fears, in which she seemed to wander upon some errand that she did not understand or could not quite remember, anxious and unhappy, until she suddenly came to a butcher-shop which she had to enter for some unknown reason. And there was the horrible man with pig's eyes and bloody hands, who looked at her and said:

"The wages of sin—" And she would wake up in deadly terror, and say to herself with all the strength of her conscious pride: "But it wasn't!" . . . Strange, that from an Arcadian realm of laughing play it should be only a step down into this world of bewildered wandering in the dark! She was finding now, in her body's pain, as she had found then in its joy, hints of something that might be her soul. It had taken wings and soared into perilous heights of starry ecstasy; and now it was brought to these bewildered, painful, wounded writhings in the dust and darkness. . . . Well, let the butcher threaten her with his bloody hands!—She wasn't sorry for anything she had done. . . . And so came sleep after many thoughts—and in sleep a long journey the meaning of which she had never known or had forgotten, in search of something, somebody—and then once more the butcher-man with bloody hands . . . and a sick horror of death. . . . And then, wide awake, she would stare out into the darkness of her room, and say to herself: "I'm *not* sorry!" But what a secret to keep to herself for ever and ever, to hide away as if it were truly shameful. One didn't talk about such things. Yet—surely—there must be somebody she would love enough to want to tell this to: one to whom this wouldn't be merely horrid: one who would have a right to understand. . . .

CHAPTER SIX: Pilgrimage

I.

"**H**OW'S that for a morning's catch?" Janet's father held up a string of pickerel. It was Sunday, and he and Bud had been out fishing since dawn.

"Fine, Brad!" said Janet. She smiled at him, and went toward the house. . . . Life had on its mask of everydayness again.

Bud, a little way up the beach, stopped and waited for her. He was fifteen, a great husky boy; Janet felt rather proud of him.

"I found out last night what was the matter with Ted's wireless," he told her. "I think we can get it fixed up by this evening, and maybe we'll hear a concert. Wouldn't you like to come over?" It was a wonderful thing to Bud; he was offering her the best he had. The fact was, he worshiped her.

"Oh, maybe," she said.

"My wireless ought to be here soon," he said.

They walked on to the house, and Bud went into the kitchen to look for a bite to eat to sustain him till dinner. He came out on the porch with a large hunk of bread and cheese. "Have you decided what you're going to get Pen for her birthday?" he asked.

"I wish you wouldn't talk with your mouth full," said Janet.

"I thought," said Bud, having swallowed his mouthful of bread and cheese, "I'd *make* her something. Do you suppose she'd like an inkstand carved out of wood?"

"I think that would be very nice," said Janet.

"Here they come now," said Bud, with a guilty conspiratorial look out through the screen. "Don't say anything to her about it, will you?"

"Of course not, Bud!" said Janet impatiently.

Pen came in. Janet looked at her with the thought "almost

fifty years old" in her mind. But Pen's appearance didn't correspond to that thought. She was still—Pen. She still swam with the youngest of them. And there was an eagerness in her face. . . . That was what bothered Janet. If she could only think of Pen as "old," there wouldn't be the impulse to confide in her—a troubling impulse that had to be checked and stifled whenever they were alone together. She had to remind herself that Pen wasn't just Pen—she was "mother." She belonged to the older generation. How could she possibly understand the things that happened to a girl of twenty-one, nowadays? And it would be foolish, it would be cruel, to cause one's mother unnecessary pain.

"Bud," said Pen, "will you get me my knitting?" She settled herself in a wicker chair. "I think I can just about finish it before dinner. I've got everything but the cuffs done.—What is to-day, the tenth?" she asked, as Bud brought her the little pink sweater-jacket. "We ought to be hearing from Mart pretty soon now." Mona's baby was due. She and Martin had been in Detroit for two years, where Martin was in the automobile business. The little sweater-jacket was for Mona's baby.

"I think I'll take a little walk," said Brad. "Anybody want to come along?"

"I do," said Janet.

2.

They paused in a clump of woods and sat down on a fallen tree, Janet perched on a protruding branch so as to half face her father. Brad lighted his pipe, and she lighted a cigarette.

"Brad," she said.

"Yes?"

"I don't want to go back to college this fall."

He didn't seem surprised. He asked thoughtfully, "What's the matter with college?"

"Nothing's the matter with college, I guess," said Janet. "It's—me."

He smiled. "Well, then, what's the matter with you?"

She exhaled a deep breath. "I can't keep on going to

school," she said. "I—I'm not a child any more. That's all."

He smiled still more fondly. "You think it's time you began to live?" he asked.

She felt a little scornful of his paternal ignorance, and merely said: "I'm twenty-one."

"I've noticed it," he said. "And I don't want to keep you a child against your will. But what do you want to do?"

"I don't know," she said. "That's just it. I want to find out."

"And how do you propose to find out?"

She was silent.

"You must have some plan," he suggested. "I've suspected ever since you came back from Chicago that you were harboring some desperate plan or other. Out with it!"

"Yes—I have a sort of plan. But it's very vague."

"Well, then?"

"I want to go to New York."

"New York. I see. And then what?"

"That's all. Just New York. I told you my plan was very vague. I haven't the slightest idea what I'll do when I get there. I shall do something. Probably a lot of different things, till I find something that suits me."

"You mean that you want to go to New York and look for work?"

"Yes. And live there. That's the plan, if you can call it a plan."

"But—why New York?"

"It's the place where people *do* go. There's everything there—and perhaps I can find what *I* want."

"And you don't know what it is?"

"No."

Bradford March was silent for a while, smoking thoughtfully.

And then he said: "You see, Janet, I'm trying to consider this question as a—a philosopher, and not as a father. Of course I'd rather keep you here. But I think— You haven't talked to Pen about this?"

"First word I've breathed to a living soul."

"We must ask her, of course. But—I'd like you to go, Janet—if you really want to."

She looked away. It was terribly nice of him. She wanted to kiss him for it.

But instead she asked:

"Then you'll stake me?"

"You mean—give you an allowance? Of course."

"Because if you weren't, I was going anyway." She said this defiantly.

He laughed tenderly.

"Brad," she said abruptly. "You don't know what I may do in New York."

"I'll try not to worry," he said. "I guess you can—take care of yourself."

"You really think so?"

"Yes. I do, Janet."

"And anything that happens to me will be—because I want it to happen—won't it?"

"I should say so."

"Well—suppose, Brad—oh, suppose I wanted to be very wild!"

"Why do you want me to suppose that?"

"Because I want to ask you—would you still love me, Brad?"

He smiled. "Yes, Janet—I'd still love you."

"In spite of anything I did?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't stop loving you, Janet. And I certainly shan't ever try. Is my answer satisfactory?"

"Yes—the inquisition is over. You pass with a mark of 100."

"The perfect father?"

"Oh, quite."

They began their walk homeward.

3.

"And," said Bradford March to his wife, "I think I know what she's looking for—even if she doesn't."

"A husband?" asked Penelope.

"Oh!—I thought myself so smart to have figured it out! And you guessed it instantly!"

"I'm a woman," said Pen.

"Well," said Brad. "We won't tell her. We'll just let her find it out for herself."

4.

Janet registered and left her bags at the Brevoort, took a ride on the Fifth Avenue bus up Riverside Drive and back, and then went to look for a furnished room. She found one in a street just off Washington Square. In a little shop she bought herself some inexpensive chinaware, and in another a percolator and an electric plate. These, with a pound of coffee, a bottle of cream and some rolls for breakfast completed her arrangements, and she moved her bags over that night so as to sleep in her new home.

She was breakfasting on coffee and rolls when there was a knock at the door, and a sleepy-looking girl in a kimono, with a tiny pitcher in her hand, said, "Good morning! I wonder if you have a little cream to spare?"

"Why, certainly," said Janet. "Take the bottle. I've had all I want, and it would only spoil."

"Thanks—awfully," said the girl, and went on down the hall. Janet saw her enter her room, the front one on the same floor.

"A Greenwich Villager," said Janet to herself. And then she reflected: "Oh, well—I'm a Greenwich Villager myself."

5.

In the course of the week she had become acquainted at joint late breakfasts with that girl who lived on the same floor. Her name was Laura Page; and the youth who shared her room was Randall Tudor. They were, as Laura secretly confessed to Janet, married. Laura was an actress, but she was not doing anything this summer; and Randall was a painter, but just now he was working in a publishing firm. They had come to Greenwich Village, both of them, less than a year ago, he from Ohio and she from Oregon. In fact, Janet privately concluded, they were no more Greenwich Villagers than she herself was. They had heard—as who has not?—of the Village, and had come here, looking for the realization of

some vague ideal of adventure, of beauty, of joy, of freedom. They had fallen in love with each other, as people do everywhere; and now they were married, and Randall had taken a job and Laura was doing nothing, just like husbands and wives back in Ohio and Oregon. Laura spent her days loafing in her room; and they both spent their evenings loafing in their favorite Village restaurant, where interminable bridge games were in progress in a little back-room. When Laura wasn't playing bridge, she danced to the music of the phonograph in the front of the restaurant, or sat about looking bored. Every now and then some one who could afford to pay for booze gave a party. Conversation was chiefly about the last party or the one coming. Janet wondered why they should have taken all the trouble to come to Greenwich Village, to live like that. Of course, they had each other. They were affectionate, quarrelsome, possessive, and habituated to each other, like any other married couple.

They served well enough for casual companionship. Janet passed many agreeable, uninspired, lazy hours with them. Some of their friends drifted in from time to time, and Janet got to know them too. They were all Villagers of recent date—ordinary, comfortable, home-like folks, with occasionally a queer one among them. They were all looking forward eagerly to Nick's birthday party, which was coming off in a week or two. Nick had been an unsuccessful poet, but was now a prosperous bootlegger—"so there will be good booze and plenty of it!" They urged Janet to come.

"But I don't know Nick!" she protested.

"Oh, that's all right. Nick will be glad to see you," they assured her.

Janet dined at Laura's favorite restaurant, and danced with young men whom somebody introduced and a few who assumed that introductions were unnecessary. . . . It was pretty dull.

6.

Janet had a letter of introduction to some uptown people, the Blairs; Margie Blair had come from White Falls, and she and her husband were friends of Helen's. But they probably

wouldn't be in town, and she hadn't wanted to see them, anyway. But Margie Blair called for her in a big limousine, and took her off to tea at a hotel. She and Roscoe, she said, were in town for a couple of days' shopping; they were going back to their cottage at Rye to-morrow. And Janet *must* come on up and meet Roscoe, and they would go out to dinner together. Margie Blair reminded Janet of Cousin Helen; she was the same radiant blonde type, though not so pretty as Helen; and she was a little like Pat in her manner. And Roscoe, her husband, whom Janet met presently at the Blair apartment, was exactly like George Hedstrom, without trying. Simple-minded and genial, his idea of a good time was founded on cocktails; when there were plenty of cocktails, everybody *must* be having a good time. So it developed later in the evening; at first Roscoe was embarrassed, because he had run into Ralph Payne, and the Paynes were similarly in town for a day or two from Long Island, and he had suggested that they all have dinner together and go to the Palais Grand to dance; and Janet, whom he hadn't expected to be along, seemed to him at first to make necessary a revision of their program. But Margie set that right. "What's the matter with you, Roscoe?" she said. "Poor Roscoe! He thinks in movie-captions. The Country Girl Visits Her City Friends! Never mind, Roscoe, the old home towns aren't so much slower than New York, are they, Janet? As for that, I'll bet Janet could show us things about New York! Janet's a Greenwich Villager, Roscoe. She knows all the artists and artists' models and so on. You must take us slumming through the Village some time, Janet."

"There isn't any Village any more," said Janet. "At least, I haven't found it yet."

"She isn't telling all she knows," said Margie; and Roscoe leered at her genially.

They discussed a possible partner for Janet; but that problem solved itself at the hotel where they dined, Margie detaching a young man without any difficulty from another group to join their own. Roscoe poured gin into their glasses of orange-juice from an enormous silver pocket-flask. "Uncle Roscoe always carries good gin," said the young man.

The floor and the orchestra at the Palais Grand were refreshing, after the phonograph in a Greenwich Village res-

taurant. The young man danced very well, even though Roscoe and "G. Whillikens" (as Ralph Payne for some reason was familiarly called) did not; and Janet would willingly have stayed there all evening, but Uncle Roscoe's pocket-flask ran dry, and he proposed that they go home and renew it. They went, and the rugs were rolled up and shoved out of the way for dancing, while Roscoe and G. Whillikens earnestly elaborated a cocktail in the kitchen.

Margie was cross with Roscoe; and Gladys (Mrs. Payne) being momentarily out of hearing she remarked that Roscoe just wanted to bring them home here "so he'd have a chance to kiss Gladys." And so, after the dancing started, it seemed; but it seemed also, to Janet, that Margie herself had no objection to being kissed by G. Whillikens. At one time Janet and the young man danced by themselves in the drawing-room, one of the couples having danced into the kitchen and the other into the hall; and when the record was finished, the young man skillfully replaced the needle at its outer edge without stopping the music, and gave the handle a few more twists, though he made no motion to resume the dance with Janet, but only stood beside the phonograph and grinned at her.

Janet was annoyed. It seemed to her a privilege of the unmarried to behave that way. She knew that married people did often so behave, but she knew only by hearsay—she had never before been admitted so frankly to these quasi-confidences. As a young girl she had been guarded by social practice from such direct knowledge of what the marital frame of mind was like. And she wondered why these barriers had been suddenly let down. Then she realized. "It's because I'm a Greenwich Villager," she said. Otherwise she might have known these people a year before they had revealed themselves to her as the vulgarians they were.

Anyway, the young man could dance; and so she danced with him. And he took no liberties, showing good judgment thereby. But he drank Uncle Roscoe's cocktails steadily, and a time came when his feet had lost their cunning.

Janet was bored.

She looked at her wrist-watch. It was two o'clock. The young man was reclining on a sofa, apparently oblivious to all things. The others were in the kitchen, loudly making more

cocktails. Janet stole into Margie's bedroom, put on her things, and went out the door. She ran down two flights of stairs and then took the elevator. She walked to the subway, and presently was in her own room and in bed.

She was rather ashamed of her desertion. It would alarm her hosts; and when they realized that she had simply walked out and gone home, they would think that she was shocked. "Well, perhaps I was!" said Janet, and went to sleep.

Margie came next morning, anxious to find out what the trouble was.

Janet affected naïveté. "Why," she said, "that's the way we do in Greenwich Village when we're tired of a party—we just get up and leave, without bothering the hostess."

"I suppose," said Margie thoughtfully, "you do get unconventional, living in Greenwich Village. Do you know, I rather envy you your freedom here." She glanced about the room. "I wanted to be an actress," she said wistfully. "I might have been one—if I hadn't married. I had a year in a dramatic school. And then I met Roscoe. Of course, he wouldn't think of letting me go on with it. But when I see you here, it makes me realize what I've missed."

"Yes," said Janet, "you've missed a lot. I suppose Roscoe wouldn't stand for the bohemian life?"

"Oh, no!" said Margie.

7.

There was one Sunday morning when Janet went to church. It was a church of her father's and her grandfather's denomination. Perhaps it was merely a vague homesickness that drew her there.

The Rev. Dr. David Truman Fort addressed his meager summer congregation on the subject of "The Christian Life." Janet endeavored to follow the sermon attentively.

"It is a characteristic of the times in which we live," said Dr. Fort, "that a new definition of a Christian living should appear to be necessary. Nor does this mean we have forgotten what was known to our forefathers. If we are less ready with such a definition than they would have been, it is because life has become more troubling and complex." Here Janet's

attention strayed for a time. She was thinking irrelevantly about herself, and her own problems. When she began to listen again, the pastor was saying: "Nor should we be too literal and unimaginative in our interpretation of this question, lest we fall into the error which we seek to avoid. . . ." It was very warm in the church. Janet settled drowsily down into her pew, still trying to follow the pastor's words. "And let us always remember that He did not scorn to eat and drink with publicans and sinners. . . ." She thought that she was back in Scott Park, a little girl, sitting beside her father in the family pew, very sleepy, and trying hard to keep awake. She listened hard, and the pastor seemed to be saying: "Publicans and sinners, publicans and sinners—He drank their cock-tails and He ate their dinners." And that, at the time, did not seem at all an odd thing for a clergyman to be saying. And presently he was addressing her directly. "You are the daughter of a deacon in the First Presbyterian Church of Scott Park," he was saying. "You are only a little girl now, but you will grow up, and life will become more complex and Freudian. When you are twenty-one years old, you won't know what to do. Shoe. Dancing-slippers. A little old woman that lives in her shoe, and hasn't any children and doesn't know what to do. So come to me and I will tell you. . . ." —She must have been asleep! She hoped it had been only for a moment, and that nobody had noticed. The pastor's voice, raised in closing his sermon, had waked her up. "This," he was saying, "is the measure of our religious sincerity, the value of our dogmas, that they make the path of life clearer to all wandering and troubled souls!" She would write to her father and tell him that she had been to church. She wouldn't tell him that she had fallen asleep in the middle of the sermon, though.

8.

Nick the bootlegger's party was almost over. But Randall was sick and Laura was ministering to him in another room; and since Janet had come with them, she preferred to wait and go home with them. She was sitting on a couch talking to a big, lumbering girl who drew fashion pictures. Her name

was some Russian name, and she was called Sasha. She had come in late.

"I have not been drinking anything," said Sasha, speaking loudly over the jazz-music from the phonograph, "so I feel somewhat out of all this."

"I haven't either, since the first round," said Janet. "And so do I."

"I suppose," said Sasha, thoughtfully, "that this is what would be in a realistic novel called an orgy."

"I suppose it would," agreed Janet, glancing around, and yawning.

"When I was young and read Dostoievsky," said Sasha, "I always thought I would like to participate in an orgy. But I find it does not appeal to me."

"Nor to me," said Janet.

"I thought an orgy would be something devilish and thrilling," went on Sasha. "But all those I have seen were childish and disgusting."

"Yes," said Janet.

"What do you think of Nick?"

"It's funny to see him stalking soberly through his own orgy, smiling his satirical smile."

Nick came up to them and bowed. "I hope you are enjoying my little party," he said.

"Oh, quite!" said Janet.

"May I get you something to drink?"

"No, thank you," said Janet.

"You are quite right," said Nick. "All the good booze is gone—what's left is inferior stuff, fit only for the riff-raff!" And he bowed again and drifted away.

"What do you do for a living?" asked Sasha of Janet.

"Nothing," said Janet. "That's the trouble. I suppose in a year or so I'll be sitting around in the back room of some restaurant playing bridge every evening and looking forward to Nick's next party."

"No, I do not think so," said Sasha. "You have too much energy."

"Too much energy. Yes—but what am I going to *do* with it?" Janet asked.

"That I do not know. But you are very young. You will find something to do."

Laura emerged from the other room, with Randall, who was very pale. "We're going home," said Laura. "Do you want to come along?"

"Yes," said Janet, and jumped up. She held out her hand to Sasha. "I hope you're right," she said. She put on her things hastily, said good-by to her host, took Randall's other arm, and departed.

9.

She remembered the crazy stranger who had written her that letter, a year ago. He had said she would be in New York when she was twenty-one. He had told her to come and see him. He had a bookshop. In fact, he had offered her a job. It would serve him right if she took him up. What was his name? Roger something. Roger Leland. That was it. . . . She looked him up in the telephone directory. Yes, he had a bookshop right here in the Village, only a few blocks from where she lived.

She went back home, and looked up her old diaries. She had brought them all along with her. She found the passage, and with some difficulty deciphered her shorthand record of his letter. It *was* a curious letter. It sounded as if he knew her. He must have known her! Hadn't there been something faintly familiar about that big, slouching, awkward figure of his? Roger Leland. Somebody she had known—a long time ago. No—she couldn't remember. What else? "I had got to thinking of you as an imaginary person—an invention of my own." That was the part of the letter that had convinced her, at the time, that he was crazy. Perhaps not—but what an odd thing to say! What could it mean? Well, she could ask him! "I want to see you and talk with you." That was sane enough. "But my stupidity—or whatever it was—prevented me when I had the chance. So I'll have to wait till you come to New York. . . . I guess that there's no doubt that you will be here when you are twenty-one." And here she was!

She lapsed into a dreamy memory of the year that had intervened since that letter had come to her—a year in which the

thought of coming to New York had never been far away from her thoughts—always there, a faint prospect of ultimate escape from an unsatisfying life in those familiar surroundings. And she woke from these dreamy memories to ask herself if she had ever thought of New York before that. No—it was this strange letter that had put the notion into her head. This man had made her come here.

Well—perhaps he could tell her what to do with herself now that she was here! She would go to see him. Already she felt an odd confidence in him, as though he were in some way connected with her destiny.

10.

The explanation of his letter to her was at first disappointingly simple. He had been at Winga Bay when she was six. "You went to sleep in my arms one Sunday night at a family picnic," he said, laughing. "Don't you remember?"

"That was fifteen years ago," she said. "How old were you then?"

"Twenty-two."

"Yes. I do remember, now. And you explained to me what a *pun* was!"

"So I did!"

"And you looked very much the same as now. You haven't changed much, have you?"

"I was very elderly at twenty-two," he said. "I don't suppose I have changed a great deal."

"I remember your black hair, and your black eyes."

"And I remember yours," he said. "That was how I knew you, after so many years, that time I saw you in Jenkins' Old Book Shop."

That reminded her. "But why," she asked, "did you think you invented me?"

He flushed. "Did I say that?"

"You wrote it. And I wondered what you meant."

"It was a foolish thing to say."

"But what did you mean?"

He looked about. There wasn't anybody in the store. "It's a long story," he said.

"I've all the time in the world," she replied.

"Well—I hope you won't think it's silly. But you were—an ideal of mine."

"An ideal!" she said. "I think it's lovely! But I was only six years old when you knew me."

"That's why," he said. "You represented the younger generation. I—well, I had been badly hurt—emotionally, I mean. I suppose I nearly went insane. And what kept me from going insane, was thinking of you."

"It's terribly interesting!" she said. "But I don't really understand."

"You see, I was through with girls—of my own generation. I thought I knew what they were like—and I despised them. That's not what I mean, either. I despaired of them, rather. I knew a girl—named Sally. . . ."

"Yes?"

"I idealized *her*, at first. And then that ideal was destroyed—in a rather terrible way. So I idealized you. I said to myself, 'Janet will be different!'"

"Different from Sally. I see. And am I?"

"Yes, of course."

"But how do you know?"

He laughed. "I suppose I have got you all mixed up with my imaginings. The Janet March I know—is different. You see, I've invented her character in great detail."

"How curious! And what is your Janet March like?"

He looked embarrassed, and then said: "Well, she's brave—and truthful—oh, there's a lot of things involved in her character. . . ."

"I'm afraid I'm not your Janet March, then," she said. "I'm not exactly brave. And I'm an awful liar."

"No," he said. "You may be afraid, but you go ahead anyway. And you don't lie to yourself."

She was rather struck by that. "How did you know?" she asked.

"You *had* to be that way," he said.

"Tell me some more about myself," she demanded.

"No," he said. "You must tell *me*. So that I'll know whether I'm right or not."

"It would be funny," she said, "if I *have* lived out the life you invented for me! You'd feel like—who was it?"

"Frankenstein. Or Pygmalion."

"Only—if you idealized me—then I haven't lived the life you invented for me. Because my life's been very—messy. A crazy sort of life. If I told you—"

"You *must* tell me."

"Shall I?"

"Yes."

"I think I will. But—I don't want to shatter your ideal."

He laughed. "Try!" he said.

"If I tell you my story, will you tell me yours?" she asked.

"Yes," he said.

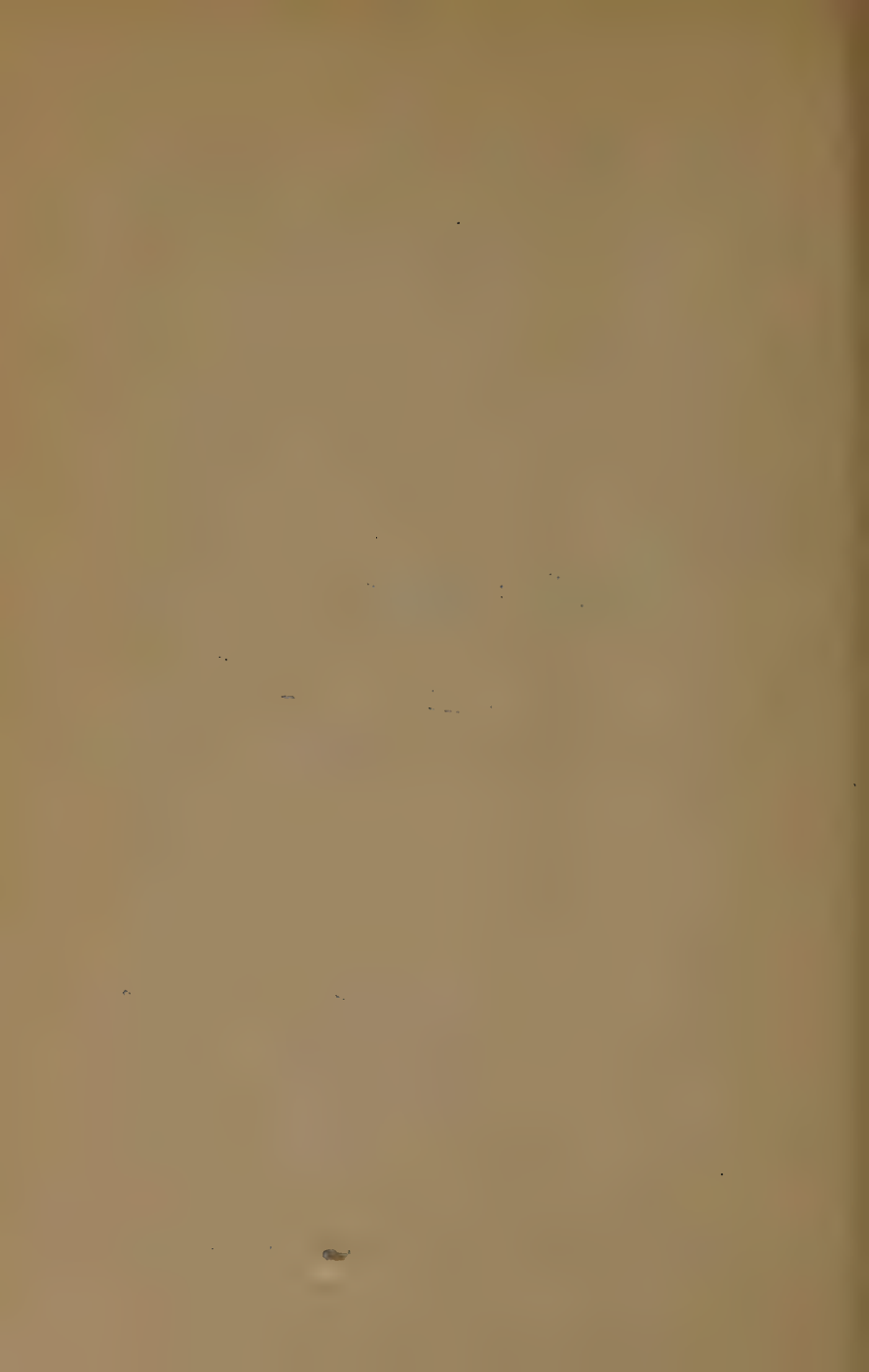
She looked about the shop. It was late Saturday night, past the closing hour. The desk beside which they stood talking was in a tiny ell, sheltered from observation by the street.

"Have you a home you *must* go to?" she asked.

"I live over the shop," he said. "With not even a cat to wait up for me."

She sat down in one of the chairs behind the desk. "Better lock the door so that no one can bother us," she said. "I'm going to tell you the whole crazy yarn."

Book Four: Roger and Janet



CHAPTER ONE: New Times, New Manners

I.

JANET MARCH stood at Roger Leland's side, leaning against the rail of a Staten Island ferry, while the dawn came up over the bay. They were silent after a night of talking.

From time to time that night, in the intervals of their talk, the external world had broken in upon them, momentarily; it had made them aware of the smoke-laden air of the book-shop . . . the gleam of lights from the Jersey shore reflected in the river as they rode up on the 'bus . . . the clatter of the empty elevated going down to Battery Park . . . the receding towers of New York against the stars . . . the blue-green flames in their driftwood fire and the lapping of the tide on a deserted spot of beach . . . the reviving aroma of coffee in a dog-wagon somewhere. . . .

And now again, in the dawn, that outer world of shapes and sounds, in which they forgetfully wandered, became real for a moment. They heard the throbbing of the engines, they felt the cool dawn-breeze on their foreheads, they saw the sky growing light above vague masses of shadow. They were aware of themselves as tired mortals; and they drew together for a moment, sharing the sensual luxury of that weariness, and of the cool air, and the dawn. Janet leaned heavily against Roger's arm, and felt his body gratefully support her; she felt his head close to hers, she knew that her hair touched his cheek; she remembered his black eyes with their smoldering depths. But he was looking away, and she, too, standing beside him, was looking away; and in another moment this sense of their present selves grew dim in her mind; the world about them receded into a dim unconsidered background, and then vanished, as her thoughts wove themselves again into the fabric of the story they had been making out of their two lives. . . . She was thinking of Sally, dead—Sally, who wasn't

brave enough to take life as she found it—and Roger, at her grave, trying to stifle the cries of accusation, of pity, of remorse, that rose in his breast. . . . Poor Sally! she hadn't been to blame. It was only that she wanted something more than the world had to give. . . . And Roger, too. That was why he had been so cruel. Yes, cruel. He expected too much. Of her—now. . . . What was it he expected her to be? In imagination she saw him sitting by the lake, throwing pebbles into the water, and thinking of a girl named Janet. . . . "Janet will be different," he had said. Strange, that he had remembered her all these years—and believed in her.

She spoke aloud: "And since then, Roger?"

"Nothing," he said. "Books—and bookshops."

"And girls who—who turned out to be merely human, I suppose?"

"I stopped demanding wonderful things of them, Janet."

"That was a pity."

"It was cowardly of me, no doubt. But I had my dream."

"Of me," she said, wonderingly; and again she felt shaken by the mystery of that unreasonable whim of his dreaming mind which had drawn her so surely into his life. She felt a surge of rebellion against the madness of that fate which had so oddly taken her and stamped her as his. Just because he had imagined an impossibly perfect creature, and chose to call her "Janet March"—!

She turned to him and said challengingly: "You know, I'm *not* your Janet March."

"You are," he affirmed dreamily.

Why should it make her so happy to know he thought so?

"You'll find me out," she said, "—just as you did Sally."

"No—you're real."

"But," she said, in a low tone, "I was a coward, too, Roger. I—I didn't have my baby, either."

"No," he said, "you weren't a coward, Janet."

"You believe that, do you, Roger?"

"Yes, Janet."

She drew a long breath. She had wanted him to say that.

"Well, then!" she said.

He was looking at her a little dazedly, as if with a film of memories still clouding his eyes.—Couldn't he understand?

He did understand suddenly, and took her in his arms. They kissed.

And it was as though they had been lovers all their lives. —Yet her mind wouldn't stop thinking, even in the midst of that kiss. It kept on ticking out curious thoughts irrelevant to the moment. "How strange!" she thought. "I'm not his Janet March—not at all. I'm *me*! His silly old notions haven't got anything to do with this. . . . Or have they? . . . It's nice to *belong* to some one—like this. It's what I've been waiting for!"

"I'm glad!" she said aloud.

2.

She became aware that he was looking at her frowningly.

"What's bothering you?" she asked softly.

"I've just begun to be afraid of something," he said awkwardly.

"What?" she demanded.

"Of falling in love with you," he said.

She looked at him in astonishment, and then laughed. "Roger—you've been in love with me all your life—even before you knew me! It's too late, now, to stop! I won't let you!"

"Well, then—I'm afraid *you'll* fall in love with *me*," he said.

She laughed again. Because it was really funny. "But, Roger—I have already! You've made me! It's too late, I tell you."

"That's it," he said, catching at her phrase. "It's too late to be any use."

"Why?—are you married, or something?"

"No." He looked at her unhappily. "But—don't you see? We belong to different generations. I'm—I'm nearly twice your age, Janet."

"Oh! Is that all?"

"It's not merely a question of our ages. I'm really—old. I sit in a bookshop all day, and dream of sometime writing a book—about my past. You live in the future. Everything is before you."

She could smile at that as at the folly of a child.

"Roger," she said, "what's the use of our arguing about it? It's happened, you know!"

"Janet," he said earnestly, "I can guess what I mean to you. You find yourself for the first time understood. But that isn't all there is to life."

"I'm not so sure you do understand me," she said. "But that doesn't matter. I can't explain it. It's something that has happened to us. I know it and you know it. And we can't get away from that."

"Let's be sober and reasonable," he said. "We're drunk with this night together. We're all aflame with a beautiful illusion that has come from talking about ourselves—sharing our lives with each other. The question is, can we keep it up? We're talked out, you know. The rest would be—just plain living. You don't mind my saying these things?"

"No. I was saying them to myself a while ago. I know it seems ridiculous. Real things always do, I expect. I tell you that we belong together. I don't know why. But I can tell you this, Roger—we weren't piecing together the stories of our lives for fun. We've begun something to-night that it's going to take a long time to finish. And now I'm not going to argue with you any more."

"I'll be honest with you," he said. "I'm afraid. You can despise me if you want to—but I've been hurt often enough. I don't want to be hurt by *you*."

"Just what are you afraid of?"

"I've told you."

"Tell me again."

"Some boy," he said bitterly, "will come along—and you'll go away with him. He won't half appreciate you. He won't understand you as I do. And I'll hate him. But he will have a young life to share with you, as I haven't. You'll be tired of my thoughts and dreams."

Janet appeared to consider gravely. "Well, Roger, I'll promise you this. I can't promise not to hurt you—but if I do, I'll make it a clean wound. If I fall in love with anybody else, I'll tell you straight out. And I'll go away with him. If he asks me. Men, you know, are afraid of girls nowadays. Maybe he won't ask me. Roger"—and her eyes lighted with mischievous amusement—"will you make him ask me?"

"I trust he will not be that dense," said Roger savagely.

"You don't know how dense they are," said Janet. "It may be necessary to prod him a little. You will, won't you? That *will* be nice of you!"

Roger looked at her miserably. "Why are you trying to turn this into a farce?" he asked.

"Because it is a farce, Roger dear. You've searched for me all your life, and then when you find me—you run away. It *is* funny. But you must do one thing for me."

"What is it?"

"You must let me work in your bookshop."

He regarded her miserably. "Why do you want to do that?" he asked.

"I must have something to do," she said. "And besides, like Sally, I want to improve my mind. Perhaps if I'm around with books, I'll read some of them. And anyway, you promised to give me a job—don't you remember?"

"All right," he said, reluctantly. "I will, then."

The ferry was drawing noisily into the slip. The water frothed up the wooden piles.

"And now let's get a cold bath somewhere and go to breakfast!" she said. "I'm beginning to like New York. I'm glad you told me to come."

"You've closed your mind against me," he said sadly. "You are beautiful and gay and hard—a stranger."

"I have shut my mind because I don't want you to see what's in it," she said. "And what better do you deserve?"

"Because I'm afraid of being hurt?" he asked.

"Yes. That's just what love is—not being afraid. But I'm going to give *you* a chance to hurt *me*, Roger—right now. I was going to be sly and crafty about it—but I can't. You can be queer and suspicious if you want to—but I've got to be myself. I love you, Roger. Here I am—yours. Take me home with you, Roger!"

CHAPTER TWO: What Janet Wanted

I.

JANET left the shop in charge of Roger for the noon-hour, went out to lunch, and then came back. But her hour wasn't up yet, so she climbed the stairs to Roger's apartment, taking down the key from its hiding place over the door. She went first to Roger's typewriting desk, and scanned with satisfaction the typed pages lying there. He had done a good morning's work. And so reflecting, she went to one of the bookshelves that ranged the little room, and took down a volume. It was inscribed by Roger to her, with the quoted line: *In you I wrap a thousand onward years*. The line was from one of the poems in the book, and she was looking for it, to see just what it meant. She looked impatiently, searching the pages with a frown. Then she glanced at her wrist-watch, gave up the search, and put the volume back. It was time to return to the shop. But first she went into the bedroom and changed into another frock for the afternoon—it only took a minute. Half of her clothes hung in his wardrobe. The others were in her own room. She brought over something more almost every time she came. It was foolish of her, she thought, to keep a separate room; but nevertheless she wanted to—for the present. She tossed back her hair, glanced at herself in the mirror, and went down to the shop.

That afternoon as they were about to close, Janet said: "I've been reading Walt Whitman, Roger."

"And what do you make of him?" he asked.

"I've been wondering why you picked on him to give me."

He went to the poetry shelf and took down a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. "Listen to this," he said. "It's about you."

*"They are not one jot less than I am,
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,*

*They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike,
retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,
They are possessed in their own right—they are calm, clear,
well-possessed of themselves."*

"Me?" said Janet.

Roger nodded. "And this, too," he said, and turned the pages.

*"Her shape arises,
She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,
The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross
and soil'd,
She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd
from her,
She is none the less considerate and friendly therefor,
She is the best lov'd, it is without exception, she has no
reason to fear and she does not fear,
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are idle
to her as she passes,
She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not offend her,
She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them,
She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than
she is."*

"It's a prophecy of you," he said. "It's called *A Woman Waits for Me*."

"Was it *me* old Walt was waiting for?" she laughed.

"It certainly was!" he said.

Just then Martin Butterfield came in. Butterfield was an author, and authors had a habit of dropping in at inconvenient hours—just to loaf. They never bought books. Roger was unduly respectful to all authors, and particularly in awe of Butterfield. He went over and greeted Butterfield respectfully. Janet nodded, and ostentatiously cleared up the desk. Roger needn't be so afraid of Butterfield; Roger's book would be quite as good as anything Martin Butterfield could write, and probably better!

Butterfield returned Roger's greeting in an abstracted way, gazed mournfully about the bookshop, and finding no consolation there, drifted out again.

"Authors are queer people," said Janet. "I hope you'll re-

main human, Roger!" That embarrassed Roger, as her confident references to his authorship always did. "You remember what we're going to do this evening?" she added.

"Have we got to do anything in particular?" he asked. "I thought I'd try to finish that chapter."

"You can finish that chapter in the morning," she said firmly. "We're going with the bunch to the Palais Grand and dance."

He reflected to himself that any one who heard them talking together so gayly and familiarly would never guess how much a stranger to him she still was, and how afraid of her beautiful strangeness he sometimes felt. . . .

2.

It was under pressure of her youthful incredulity, her refusal to understand why he should be content merely to dream of his book, that he had begun to write it. He found it delightful to be thus possessed and commanded by her.

He had been afraid—of being hurt. Loving her, he had queerly distrusted her. But she had offered herself too magnificently to be denied. "Here I am!" she had said. And so—here she was. But he was still afraid. And she laughed at his fears, arrogantly sure of herself.

She had made over his life in a hundred ways in that brief time. He had been an unsociable person, living in a world of books and dreams. Already, since she had been in New York, she had made more acquaintances than he had in six years. And she drew him into these acquaintanceships in spite of his protests. "These people mean nothing to me," he had said. "Nor to me, either," she laughed, "but they are fun to watch." And among them, to his surprise, they had found real friends. They were all young people, not yet so intent upon their careers as to have lost interest in talk and dancing and walks and picnics in the woods. All their evenings and Sundays were gay and alive. Their own life was keyed up to the pitch of that night when they had wandered about on 'buses and ferries, learning to know each other.

But since he had started writing in the mornings she had guarded his hours of sleep jealously. She had a practical rea-

son, of a sort, for everything she did. That was the fascination of her companionship—it was so continually and surprisingly a mixture of the soberly discreet, the tenderly maternal, the boyishly friendly, the delightfully childlike, and the passionately romantic. . . . That inevitable young fool, when he came, wouldn't half appreciate her.

They were friends particularly with two other couples, with whom they usually made up their parties for dancing and picnics. Stanley Bunce was an adventurer, in his way; he had done newspaper work all over the world, and had been in Russia during the March revolution; he had acquired thereby a fondness for revolutions, and was at this moment trying to decide whether Germany or Italy was the right place to go next, in order to see one. George Wakefield was also a restless soul; he had been in the ministry, but had left his pulpit to help conduct strikes; he cherished the conviction that Jesus had been a labor-leader, and intended some day to write a book about it. Sylvia Bush was a sub-editor of one of the big women's magazines, and hated her job; she intended to go with Stanley to Germany or Italy as the case might be. Carolyn Ross had been active in the woman suffrage and other militantly radical movements, and had just missed being sent to prison during the war for saying, as she put it, "what everybody is saying now." They were all interested in ideas, but that did not prevent their being very much interested in life. They made splendid company—and they enjoyed each other's companionship all the more because in a few months they might be scattered apart, Stanley and Sylvia somewhere in Europe, and George and Carolyn perhaps in different county jails for different causes. Meanwhile they danced and picnicked, talked and laughed, together.

Janet gave up her room that fall. "I'm here all the time anyway," she said. "Do you mind having my name on the letter box beside yours?"

3.

And then Janet discovered that she was pregnant. Her first thought was of Roger. If he didn't like it, she would go. But she must wait, and be quite sure.

She told him one evening. He had been reading poetry to her, and she hadn't been listening. She lay on the couch, and looked at him as he read—looked at his black eyes and black hair and big slouching shoulders as if for the last time. He closed the book. And then she told him, abruptly. He was silent. "Oh, there's no doubt of it!" she said.

He was looking at her with one of his queer looks that meant he was thinking some queer, suspicious thought. Never mind! he could think his queer thoughts—this was action, this was reality, this was where she was at home.

She laughed. "That would seem to be my destiny, Roger—to have babies. Dr. Zerneke said I would have splendid ones. And I'm going to *have* this one," she said defiantly, "whether you like it or not!" She hadn't intended to say that last thing.

The queer look flitted from his face, and he rose and came over to her. "But, Janet—I do want you to!"

She took a long breath. "Oh, I'm so glad!" she said, and drew his head down to her breast. "I thought maybe—"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing. I suppose I ought to have known. But somehow I've an idea that men don't want babies!"

"And I suppose I've a queer feeling that girls don't want to have them. . . . I'm glad you do. . . . But it isn't just that. It means something special to you and me. It means that this isn't a dream."

"Yes," said Janet, "it means that this is real—our being together."

"You've been a stranger to me," he said, "for a long time. A delightful strange girl. But this is different—we're starting in where we left off that first night. I wonder what it is that's happened to us?"

"I suppose we're married, Roger."

"That's probably it," he said. And they laughed.

"It isn't enough, is it—just being lovers? It was lovely, but it wasn't real. One has to risk something—create something! All my life I've wanted to *do* something with myself. Something exciting. And this is one thing I *can* do. I can"—she hesitated—"I can help create a breed of fierce and athletic girls, new artists, musicians, and singers—"

"Old Walt!" he murmured.

"Yes," she said. "And I found that line you wrote in my book for me: *In you I wrap a thousand onward years.*—Roger, this makes it true."

"It's funny," said Roger.

"Yes, isn't it!—what?"

"How we've gone about getting married. I suppose some people would think it a queer way. But anyway, now that it's happened, we might as well invite church and state to ratify the fact."

"Oh, I suppose so," said Janet. "There's one thing I like about the marriage ceremony, Roger. They don't ask you what you think. They say—Do you take this man to be your husband? It's a question of *doing* something."

There was a ring—a peculiar and familiar ring—at the bell.

"That's the Rev. George," said Roger, and smiled at her. "Shall we let him in on it?"

"Yes, of course. And then I must wire Pen and Brad; won't they be surprised!"

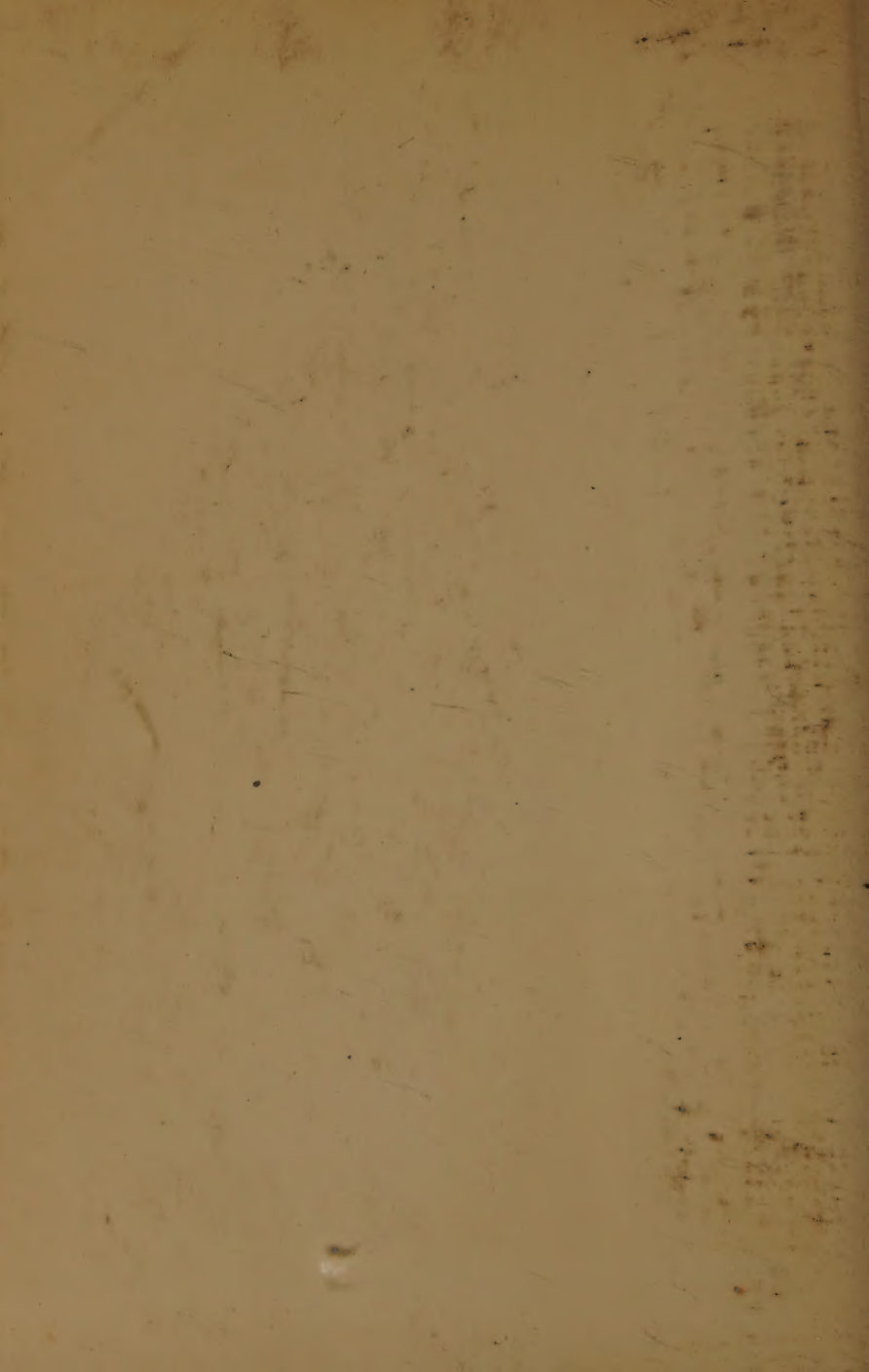
But perhaps they weren't. Perhaps they really knew Janet, after all. And perhaps she had justified their confidence in her. Perhaps even if they had known—older-generation folks that they were—all the experience, sweet and harsh, that had gone to the making of Janet's marriage, they wouldn't have been too shocked to understand. They'd have been sorry that their little girl had had to find her destiny by such devious and unhappy paths. But they'd have been, in spite of everything, rather proud of the way she came through it. And perhaps they would have been right.

POSTSCRIPT

LIFE is more than mating, and yet mating remains an important part of life. And this story may have served to illustrate some of the difficulties of that process in our times. So far as Roger is concerned, he might have been dismissed as a queer, oversensitive young man, whose demands upon life were excessive: as no doubt they seemed not so many years ago. But the poets from whom he learned to make his magnificent demands upon life were true prophets. The kind of girl with whom he could be happy—though not, indeed, the kind he thought he required—was being created in increasing numbers by the Machine Age. As for the kind of girl he thought he required—the one whose laughing kisses should be “as untroubled and inconsequent as butterflies”—she was never more than the neurotic dream of an unhappy man. What he really wanted was simple enough—a kind of girl who should be accustomed to face and accept the facts of life and of her own nature. If Janet wasn’t as wonderful as he thought her, she was nevertheless all he needed to make him—within this particular realm—happy. For though masculine idealists can be outrageous and absurd in their ideals of womanhood while they are seeking in vain for what they want, they are easily contented when their wishes are met half way. And it would seem that modern times are meeting more than half way, in this matter of women, the wishes of some of the most outrageous male idealists of yesterday. . . . As for Janet, it appears that these wild young women are not wrecking the social order by their behavior, so much as commencing to rebuild it upon a more secure basis of candor. If they demand and achieve a more effective control over their own biological powers, it doesn’t mean that they don’t want babies. If they pay little attention to the ancient legalities and none to the ancient sanctities of marriage, it does not mean that they fail to understand and live up to the realities of that relationship. Janet is not at all an extreme or even an advanced example of these modern young women; the more advanced ones are more interested in work than Janet, more ambitious, and more intent upon solving the problem of economic independence along with the problem of having babies. But in one

respect she is probably typical of them all, not excepting the extreme types, in a matter in which they differ from an earlier generation of conscious feminists. Their modernism is not bookish or theoretical, and it has come about apparently by accident, through adaptation to the circumstances of a changing world. If they are courageous, they are nevertheless a little bewildered—and they are all the more appreciative of masculine sympathy, understanding, and approval. They don't, as a matter of fact, get enough of it from the corresponding generation of young men—a great many of whom, they find, are afraid of them. This fear, to be sure, is founded upon the economic insecurity of the young men; and it is being progressively conjured away by proof that the girls can both support themselves and control their biological powers until there is an income sufficient to maintain a baby in the style which it expects nowadays. In the meantime, to girls who have inevitably formed their notions of courtship upon the bold and aggressive males of fiction, the actual timorousness and evasiveness of young men remains a disappointing and depressing fact about the world in which they live; and a realistic account of a girl's reactions to this aspect of the modern mating process will obviously be less gratifying to idealistic men of all ages than to exasperated young women.

F. D.



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